

Curious Now with Jonathan Van Ness & Annie Wu Henry

JVN // If you haven't heard of Annie, you've almost definitely seen her work. She's a social media and digital strategy expert for progressive organizations and campaigns. She was the TikTok queen behind John Fetterman's victorious Senate race. Yes!! And these days she's the creative director and digital communications lead at the AAPI Victory Fund and working on digital and social strategy with the Working Families Party. Annie, how are you?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I am so good. So happy to chat.

JVN // Honey, just so y'all can visualize this podcast world: I am in, in a closet with ring lights. Annie is in front of a gorgeous like window, just bathed and like, just natural light, giving us, like, perfect social media understanding. No, because your frame is giving me perfection. Okay, so it's kind of wild when you think about it, that TikTok didn't even exist when Trump was elected President. So how do you think TikTok has changed the game for electoral politics?

ANNIE WU HENRY // It's always funny because I was a journalism and political science major in college, and I knew I wanted to be in politics, but I didn't necessarily know how. And I was interested in social media. But I always say that, like when I was in school, my job currently, like, it didn't exist. And so how was I supposed to know that's what I wanted to do? But yeah, I mean, I think these spaces online, whether it be TikTok, whether it be, whatever you want to call the old bird app, has been bought by, you know, Instagram. So Facebook, all these things that are popping up like they're they're only expanding and they're only growing. More and more people are just constantly going to be online, whether we like it or not: that's how they're ingesting their information; that's where they're getting it; that's where they're connecting with people. And so, being there is really important because that is again, that's where they're getting their information. And in politics, we have a saying a lot of times in strategy, that like it's like, "meet people where they're at." And at this point, I think that's a bit overused, but it's so true that you you need to be where the people are going to be because them going out of the way to find you, you're going to find the people that are already really active and engaged, but you're not going to find those people that maybe would be interested, but need someone to give them a little push. And if it pops up, if it pops up on their for you page, they're maybe likely to give that little 10 or 15 second video a listen whether it's coming from, you know, a candidate or a party or an organization or just a person talking about a candidate or a party or a person or an issue that they care about.

JVN // Mmm! Okay so what goes into creating TikTok videos for a political candidate or a group?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I mean, it's different for every person or group. Obviously, you have to know like what your end goal is. One of the things I really love about campaigns—I'm very like project oriented—is that like it feels like one big project and everyone has the same goal: it's Election Day; getting voters to the polls to vote for your candidate and to win. And so everything should be contributing to that or to something that's going to help us do that. Whereas if it's an organization that's more issue based, if it's a sitting member, their goal might be a little bit different, as well as the the principal, or whoever you're talking about is going to be different as well creating for and I think authenticity is also a word that we overuse a bit—again, because it's very true—but you need to you need to stay true to who they are. There were a lot of trends that like we were just never going to do on the Fetterman campaign because it just it wasn't something that he would ever do; he

would find it cringy, he would not want to do that. And so, finding the humor that he liked and what made sense for him, it's very different than, for example, if I was running social media or making videos for Pete Buttigieg or Gavin Newsom or, you know...you can name any politician, it's going to vary because it should be, it should still be true to who they are. Because the whole purpose of a platform like TikTok, I think, is to show that authenticity. You get to see videos of people talking or moving or whatever it might be. And I think that's really powerful. And so using it in the most authentic way possible.

JVN // What were some of your favorite viral moments from the Fetterman campaign that you guys got to create?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I mean, there were so many. I mean, personally, as a Swiftie, I loved that we were able so quickly to use the: "It's me. Hi! I'm the problem, it's me." And that one did really well because it was just so simple and easy for people to understand as well as it was fun. I... this was not like the biggest moment, but I just think it's so fun because it's something that I never would have imagined myself being able to do in a workplace setting, especially in a political workplace setting, was using the Adam Levine like thirst DM meme, and we were able to do that just in some ways, and then also for fundraising asks. It's like using some of those moments that I just never thought would be like given an okay. And I give a lot of credit to our leadership that was like, "We trust you to understand these spaces and these things." Yeah, there were so many. I mean, everyone loved crudité. I think as someone who was ingesting all of the sentiment around crudité, like, I would like to mute that word forever from my brain, but I understand fully why it was so, such a beloved moment. I think it was... it was an attack sort of in politics that didn't feel gross or grimy. Nobody was getting really personal about it. It was just like a ridiculous video that everyone could find some, like, fun in seeing why it was ridiculous. And again, it didn't make it, didn't make people feel like some of the attack ads on TV that are like just really nasty. It didn't make them feel like that. It was just like everyone knows how to grocery shop...like, except for you, clearly.

JVN // Oh, that's hilarious. I did love that moment and I certainly heard of it even though I was Team Fetterman before that moment happened. Love him, and I'm so glad that he won. I was like watching his election so closely and I'm so happy that he did it.

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah, PA is such an important state.

JVN // It really is. And they have actually a lot of off-election things going on right now. They have, like, some House seats up or like a Supreme Court seat up. Like there are some important shit happening in Pennsylvania.

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah. PA Supreme Court is coming up in November and as a very purple state, you know, a state that went for the the orange guy in 2016 and went for, you know, Joey B in 2020: it's very diverse. I'm from a really conservative, rural white area, scary of Pennsylvania but like those areas aren't to be forgotten. And I do think one thing that like we hopefully showed with this, "every county, every vote mentality," in Fetterman, we went to so many red places and we had so much support in those places. And so, they're not lost and again, a lot of these things like autonomy, people's ability to get married to who they want to get married, to, people's ability to have like just live their authentic selves...like, those are things that a lot of people can understand if you just talk to them.

JVN // Yes. I mean, I do think trans rights and trans issues are like hard because I feel like Republicans get so down and dirty so fast, like whether it's like saying like, you know,

“birthing person, what's that?” Or like, “three year old shouldn't this and that!” And then you got to be like, you got to talk about like misinformation and disinformation...it's like a larger thing. So I feel like it's like harder with trans stuff, but for everything else, I'm like vibing so hard everything that you're saying. I also, the every county, every vote thing is so important for statewide candidacy because like, you never want to write anything off because it's not like the Electoral College applies to counties like for governor and for senator and stuff. So you really do got to go to like every county and don't write anyone off. So any Democrats listening right now: every county, every vote! So I love this term, you described yourself as as a “zillennial”. So what do you think people—which I am guessing is is a combination of a Millennial and Gen Z person, you're like cusp—so what do you think people miss when they talk about Millennial and Gen Z voters?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah, so I was born in '96. Some people consider me a Gen Z, some people consider me a Millennial. I definitely see both sides of myself and how I go about things or how I think about things. And I also like, I think, can also look at the different groups kind of from the outside and see what I what I notice about them. And one difference is that like, Millennials were really politically shaped by the Obama years. That was a lot of like Millennial generation's first election, first time being politically engaged and understanding that. And that was an era of a lot of hope. And it was this big historic thing that this country did. And then, you know, Gen Z, a lot of their first election—whether they were able to vote in it or not—but the first election they really could understand was 2016.

And, you know, that was something that's still very traumatizing to a lot of people with how that, how that turned out. And pretty much the opposite, this feeling of like we did this big thing before and now we're not even just like going backwards, we're like, we're digging ourself deeper. And so, sometimes Millennials, like, I think, have more faith in some of the systems in some of these...because they've seen it work, whereas Gen Z's have not. And I think when you communicate especially to Gen Z's, you need to understand where that perspective is coming from...of that, they haven't ever expected to be able to afford college without massive student loan debt. They haven't ever expected to be able to buy a home very easily. They haven't expected anything to be easy. They haven't known a planet that hasn't been on fire or that there was going to be hope because their entire lives have been like... has hasn't necessarily been progress that they've been viewing. And so I think coming at things at a lens of understanding that perspective with with the different groups is really important to keep in mind.

JVN // This is kind of off topic but, or is on topic, but I don't I just it's coming for me. How much of an impact do you think that the Dobbs decision is going to have on 2020 for for Gen Z and Millennial voters?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I think it's a huge, huge issue that honestly pretty across partisan lines like a lot of people are very upset, which is what it means, and that people did not expect this to happen. I think specifically with with young voters, Millennials and Gen Z's, that this is a right, a human right that our grandparents had, that we are not going to get to have. And that's a very stark and obvious regression of progress. And so as we've seen in the special elections that have happened, as we've seen in the elections that have occurred since the Dobbs decision, like being against abortion, being against basic autonomy over someone's body is not a winning issue, and has not been a winning issue yet since that decision has happened. And I think people really are understanding the stakes of what that means. And also, if we don't do something about it, how things like that can be even furthered.

JVN // But how interesting, you know, when you think about it, that Dobbs happened and then our midterms were literally after Dobbs and we still lost the House, which to me, I think I know that we did better than what we thought we were going to do...this is all so off topic, but I think this is a really important question and I'm really concerned about it. And I think I maybe I'm like: we need more zillennials and Gen Z's to like be able to lead the charge on this. But I do think that we, when it comes to narrative, and I think that Gavin Newsom said this, like we are seeming to get crushed on narrative. And I think when it comes to like, you know, any sort of House committee hearing or Senate hearing, they're constantly coming up. Republicans are trying, constantly trying to like, you know, make us seem like we don't even know what a woman is. And, you know, they're getting us off on all these, like, fringe ideas. But really, like we have a huge ethics scandal at the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is like literally who reversed our right to bodily autonomy for abortions, for women's rights and birthing people's rights for bodily autonomy In states like where I live, like Texas, you know, people can't get an abortion. They're trying to kind of get it clarified. But still, it's a nightmare. So many women are dealing with, you know, serious repercussions to their bodies. There's teens that are having pregnancies in like places like Mississippi and Arkansas that can't get out of there. And I also think, like, obviously, climate is a huge issue for a lot of young voters. How do you think we can get ahead of some of these really complicated messaging issues and like simplify it for people?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah. I mean, I think the the left in just historically, we haven't done the best job at letting people know why what we care about is important in simplified terms. A lot of these things are very nuanced and there should be room for nuance and to have those further conversations. But to get people's attention, you can't start off with the long paragraph of text that is all of the nuance. You need to give kind of the top line reasonings. And I think, for example, like what we've seen more recently with things like abortion, is that no matter timeline or any of these things that the right is arguing, like it is autonomy over someone's body and people should have that right. And we need to be able to concretely do that with all of these issues, like with LGBTQ+ issues, with the education kind of suppression that has started to happen.

We try to talk around of like why they're wrong and not just like why this should be common sense. And, you know, I think with with messaging, a lot of the times things come off as so political. I live in Philly, usually. I'm calling in right now from New York, but I don't live in D.C. And I think so much of my perspective, I like to keep from like Philly and D.C. because a lot of times when I'm in D.C. and I'm around people who work in it and I'm around everyone who's reading the news and is watching the news and knows the latest legislation...like we all have, like vernacular and understandings of things that like everyday people don't. And one of the things that we did on the Fetterman campaign that I'm...I just think was so beautifully done by our entire team, across the board, was just we had a really populist messaging. It was pretty easy for people to understand.

And it wasn't this like super left or super right. It was just like caring about everyday people. "When you go to the grocery store, prices are going up. Like, I will protect your right to get married. I will protect you and your identity to be authentically who you are. Like, I am against corporate and influential spending in politics," like these really easy things for people to understand that it didn't...and I think that's why we had, we had a ton of Republicans that were in support of John. And so I think it was because we were able to message from a populist way, and not trying to get into the nitty gritty that a lot of people don't even then take the time to understand. And not that that's right either.

JVN // No, that's so fucking brilliant. How do you translate likes and shares into votes though? Like do, did you see a correlation into the work that you guys did on social media and actually turning people out on voting day?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah. I mean, there's so many aspects that contribute to why someone might vote for a candidate. And I think social media is one important piece of that big puzzle. But I always say, like, I think it's in advertising. It's like or maybe it's remembering names: it's like seven times. And I think social media is one of them, right? Like if you see a billboard or if you see an ad on TV, you might be like, "Oh, whatever." And then you see them pop up and then you see, you get a mailer and all these different things. At one point or another, if you're doing effective messaging, hopefully someone will say like, "Oh, I'm going to go check that person out." I think with social media, on my end, was I really wanted to keep things authentic to the platforms because not only do you need to meet people where they are, you need to meet them the way in which they're using that space. And so, like, it'd be great, yes, to like, have a video and have a bunch of people being like, "vote blue," like, which again, you should do!

But like, it's better for someone to, like, engage with it actively and say like, "Oh, I learned something," or, "Oh, I'm going to tag some friends in this," or, "Oh, this was entertaining and I want to share this with someone," because that's how that's how you can get people not just like passively engaging but actively engaging in what you're doing. And then again, hopefully having some personal, you know, affiliation with with the candidate or an issue or what you're doing that they're like, "I'm going to take this a step further: I'm going to do a phone bank, I'm going to go to an event, I'm going to donate money, I'm going to tell some friends." And then ultimately, ideally, like, "I'm going to vote for this person," because you want them to not just see it, not just like it, but you want them to take action. And so I think it's giving them those, those reasons to.

JVN // Yes! Now, the Presidential election may be a year away, which is wow. But the race has already begun. So how are candidates faring on social media so far?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I mean, I think they're doing fine. I think they're doing good. There's been some, you know, hit videos. There was one a little bit back during the summer of Marjorie Taylor Greene giving a statement that was pretty pro-Biden, and, you know, the Biden-Harris campaign using that as a moment that caught some traction. I think one thing with the online space that we have to remember, especially about timing, because so much of social media is about timing. I can talk about Grimace right now and it's like, who's that? That was a trend that was like two months ago. That's old news. So much of it is about timing, especially with politics. People, especially if they're not as actively engaged in the political news space, they're not maybe going to see a video in September of 2023 and say like, "This is what's going to make me go vote all of these months later in 2024."

So (a), I think it's like starting now and building some base to keep going and building that beginning relationship, I guess parasocial relationships sort of with with potential voters, but also like understanding that so much of this is going to keep coming and a lot of what the discourse is right now, in a lot of these moments that are happening, are a lot of the people that are just really highly engaged and going to probably inform themselves anyway. And for some of these other folks, we need to be actively figuring out how we can, we can reach them as well. Because if you're following—I always say this—like if you're following like a bunch of candidates, a bunch of news outlets, like a political party, different organizations, like on social media, you're probably someone who's going to do your due diligence. You're probably someone who's going to at least like, look up, who's running for office,

know when Election Day is, etc.. And so trying to figure out how to get on the for you pages, how to cater content in a way that's going to pop up for people who, who algorithm's not already like, "Oh, they like politics," that's important.

JVN // Ooooo that's a really good one. Like, yeah, that's, that was the million dollar question. So if you're any like political strategist, like understanding what Annie just said right now, you better fucking get that together. That's so good. So I actually have like a little bit of questions that's like on but off. So, Presidentially, at this point, it seems that Trump and Biden are the prospective nominees. Like we don't know yet, but we know that's probably what's going to happen. What are your biggest fears or hurdles that you think that we have, or what do we need to do to prevent a Trump 2024, do you think? Because because I think some folks are a little worried right now. Like, are you worried?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I mean, I think you should never feel like anything's guaranteed. I think....I mean, I also my first election cycle was 2016. And so I think that guides a lot of my perspective on things because we, people felt so confident. We looked at the polling, you looked at all of these different symbols and we thought, you know, we were going to have our first woman president, and that is not what happened! And so I think, I don't think anyone should feel like anything is ever safe. You should always act like we're behind, even if you're ahead like, because you just got to keep doing the work because you never know. Like, especially in this news cycle, in this climate, like anything can truly happen. I'm kind of going into this cycle feeling that way. I think, you know, Biden absolutely is is the better candidate, is the better human, and he's likely going to be the nominee. And I think people can have their thoughts on whether that should be the case or not. You know, voting and supporting who's going to harm people less, is my motto. And so, like...if we look at those two candidates like, who is going to harm people less?

Who is going to harm the people you care about less, the issues you care about less. And I have a lot of people online that follow me that are really far left. And whenever I post something about someone who is politically not as left as they are, like, I think nobody is making you pay or do things directly for this candidate...I would vote for them. But there's so many other races: like we were talking about the House, the Senate, like find a local candidate that is more aligned with your values and put your energy towards that rather than tearing down, you know, someone we still do need to be elected. If you say, "I don't want to send my money to whatever," then send your money to a down ballot race; send your money to a Democrat that aligns with you that you agree with, and then still vote, down the ballot and up the ballot for the people who are going to harm less, and that's likely going to be Joe Biden on the Democratic ticket side. And I think if you're upset with that system, get more involved so that in the future it doesn't have to be like this. But that's that's where we're at right now.

JVN // What are your tips for avoiding misinformation and fake news, when being on social?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I always talk about social media as being powerful, and I always use the word power because it can be used for good or the opposite. And we definitely see that, especially with the amount of media we consume. And even if it's not misinformation, a lot of people just read the headlines. Yeah, finding trusted sources, whether that's journalists, publications or like activists or educators that can really inform you on topics that you trust and still still do due diligence on it, but you can go to and say they're likely going to have some good reputable information on this; having that be diverse and not just going to, you know, five journalists, at one news outlet, it's going to be a variety. And I also always like to plug like local, a lot of times.

And they're going to have better understandings; whether that's people on the ground and activists and organizers or journalists, they're probably going to have a better understanding of what the sentiment and what the impact is on that issue in that area, then maybe a national reporter...and not because the national reporter isn't, you know, taking the time to do their work, but because that person's there. It's just I give the example, again from our Senate campaign, of like just like you wouldn't want a person from out of state representing you, the people that are in your communities are going to understand that more. And a lot of the humor we use of the jokes that he made that didn't land in Pennsylvania—like making fun of someone's health—was because he didn't understand the state, because he wasn't from there. And so getting information from the people that are closest to the work is probably going to be people's best bet.

JVN // Yes! Okay, local so important. Like, absolutely echoing that, obsessed with that answer. So you are a full time political strategist. I love that you said earlier that when you were in college, your job didn't exist yet. And so you kind of like have learned on the job like becoming a full time political strategist because it's so much on social...How have you found your voice online during this time, and how has social media changed since you started your work?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah. I mean, social is so different. I remember being on my college newspaper and stories started being able to be a thing on Instagram, and I was like, "We should get on this for, you know, breaking news or whatever's happening on campus." But I think, you know, I was interested in politics, I was interested in media, I was interested in like people engaging with each other and connecting online and how that all those things could fit together. And I took a very traditional job out of college doing marketing, communications and social media work to have health care, to be able to pay my bills, to be responsible, etc., and said, you know, "I'd like to be interested in politics. I don't necessarily know how." I was from a really small, conservative rural area, and there wasn't a lot of politics visible to me because everyone was so homogenous and so there wasn't a lot of organizing happening; there there wasn't a lot of campaigning happening, that I saw. And so all these different ways to be involved and now these new ways, I didn't know existed. And the only thing I knew about like politics was like moving to D.C. and working on Capitol Hill. And I didn't think I necessarily wanted to do that. And so I started just posting, I was very active on social media, just posting about things I liked, whether that was food or whether that was, you know, pop culture or music or movies or whether that was, you know, things politically that I was doing.

And I think as I was learning to be an adult in the real world and still trying—I didn't have like a ton of money I could do, to just like donate or all the time in the world to just go and volunteer—but I was trying to do a little things and trying to find little resources to educate myself. And I would start sharing those with friends because maybe it would help them too. And you know, as the social space works, I had some things that went a little bit viral that brought some other people in that I said, you know, "I didn't ask for this platform, but if I'm going to have it, I'd like to hopefully be somewhat helpful," and then finding people in that space as well. I was really earnest. Like I will say that like I, I wrote a bunch of articles that were for free on shit you should care about. And when that was first starting, I was just trying to help wherever I could, helped like Women for Biden, because I couldn't take the job officially on the campaign because I didn't want to give up my health care yet.

But I, I was really earnest just because I was like, what can I do to be involved? And I was always making anything I could like political just because I cared and found myself back in

Philly after the primary, I had worked on a congressional primary as well, where I worked that as well as my full time job, to save up some money to dive into politics because it is cyclical work and things like health care do come in cycles. And so I needed to give myself a little bit of a cushion and a safety net to be able to take care of me. And then I had reached out to the Fetterman campaign and said, "Hey, I have some ideas. I've been doing some of this work with some organizations and different things in Pennsylvania. I have some ideas if you'd like to hire me part time to help or whatever it might be like, I just don't want to wake up the day after the election and feel like I could have done more." And then we talked a little bit and they offered me a full time role and here I am. But it hasn't been...it's kind of an all over the way path, but I think I'm better for it and I've learned a lot along the way that I wouldn't have otherwise.

JVN // Thank you so much for sharing that with us and just for your experience. And thank you so much for all the work that you do. So you've been an advocate for AAPI communities in politics and beyond. So what's it been like to work with groups like the AAPI Victory Fund?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I've I've just learned and grown so much from it, and I'm just so appreciative of being able to work in community. I was adopted at 13 months old. I was adopted into a very loving, white family and into a town that was very white. And so a lot of that part of my identity, I didn't explore whether it was some internalized stuff or whether it was just not knowing, or having resources or having people around me or seeing it. And as I've gotten older and as you know, people talk about the phrase like "representation matters", like it's so simple and seems so cheesy, but it does...especially as someone who I grew up in, I didn't see that. I didn't have things to look up to or to understand, like how, you know, other than like Mulan, who's not even a princess, but she's a badass. That was going to be a part of who I am and being a part of who I was as a person. And honestly, one of the first things that I wrote about when I was starting to get a bit more politically active online was about when the pandemic had first hit, or when it was first starting and being talked about... I don't think it had even hit the US yet.

And, you know, some of the rhetoric that our President at the time was using surrounding the virus and kind of giving an ethnicity to something that does not have an ethnicity. And how that was that impacting people who looked like me. And it and it really, I think started to set in of like, it doesn't matter that I have white parents it doesn't matter that like I am very Americanized or whitewashed in these different ways. Like, it doesn't matter. Like what people see is like it's going to shape how my life is and has shaped how my life is. And I've done a lot of a lot of reflection on that. And so being able to be a part of that space, it's been one of the first times in my life that I've gotten to to really do that. And it's different for everyone, it means different things for everyone...Being able to be in that community, though, means a lot. And when I'm able to talk about things in that regard or meet other people and have that, it's it's just something it's hard to describe. But it's it's I'm just really, really grateful for it.

JVN // I love that you get to be in community. And also, I was thinking earlier, can you tell us what AAPI stands for in case anyone doesn't know?

ANNIE WU HENRY // So AAPI, which now has been a bit extended to a AANHPI, Asian-American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander, and so it's trying to be as inclusive as possible, as well as like Asian-American, is that you're also an American and so...

JVN // So how can we support AANHPI rights beyond the ballot box?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah, I think it's just like I would recommend supporting any community: it's listening, meeting people and hearing their perspectives, seeing what organizations or people doing that work are doing and supporting that. But then there's also basic things that you can do in your everyday life of like: what AANHPI creators are you following, what AANHPI restaurants are going to, or brands are you buying from? You know, what actresses and actors and people are you supporting in the arts or different things like that, because I think you know, showing that that is mainstream...I think we've seen things like, you know, "To All The Boys" and "The Summer I Turned Pretty" and people like Olivia Rodrigo of like having people that are yes, they're Asian, but they're also now these mainstream... that that's not always been the case. And so, watching and supporting and doing things like that is... that that is impactful in itself.

JVN // Yessss. Annie, if anyone's listening to this episode and your work and they have just been so inspired to get political on socials, what's something that we can do right now?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah, I mean, everyone has a voice and can make an impact. I think the easiest one is just to educate yourself. We're all learning. We're all growing. I'm not perfect. Also, give yourself grace in the process. But, starting to try to get informed on the issues and the things that you do care about so that you can start to dig deeper. Then start to talk to your friends and your family; you can share on social media, you can attend an event, you can get involved with a local organization. There's so many different ways and it doesn't have to look the same. If you...I think a lot of Gen Z sentiment is that like you have to be on TikTok. Like, yes, it's a great place to be and if you want to, it's an amazing tool that anyone can pull out their phone and make a video and has the potential to reach millions. But if you don't want to be in front of the camera, that's okay, too. There's so many other ways to get involved. And I think it's just saying, "I want to do this," knowing why you want to do it and what you want to do it for, and then figuring out what the best way to do that is. And not any way is right or perfect...like figure out what makes sense for you, given your interests as well as like, what resources and abilities you have. But there's there's room for all of us and we need it! We need everyone in this space, especially when we talk about things like rest, like we can take rest because there's so many other people doing the work. And so, if you're interested, like, please just get involved, start talking, start trying to learn. And it's not as scary as it may seem or daunting, I promise.

JVN // Yes, that's so important. And I loved how you said earlier that, like the data shows that so many people's opinions are moved by people that are close to them. So your video doesn't even have to go viral; just like you using your voice, no matter if you—like, you said earlier—whether you have, like 7, 70, 700,000, no matter the followers: your voice makes such a big impact. I think the biggest mistake that anyone could make is not using their voice in the first place. So please get out there and use that voice. Now it's time for a rapid fire media moment, Annie, so we can really just fully end our gorgeous interview on a gorgeous note. So let's get into our rapid fire media moment. What was your pop culture obsession growing up—a story or event or moment you simply couldn't get enough of?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Oh, I mean, one thing that I was obsessed with as a child was Legally Blonde the Musical. I still am. And it was the first Broadway show I went to. I knew the entire soundtrack. I still do... It also—like now thinking about, like, what that show is about—like, it makes sense. But yeah, I was, I was deeply obsessed. Anyone who was in a car, in my parents van, for multiple years of my life knows that soundtrack and probably hates it. I also was really obsessed with the butterfly effect and just like, think it's a really cool thing and anything that's butterfly effect.

JVN // What's your current pop culture obsession?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Oh, well Taylor Swifts like... I feel like that's just, like, the easy answer so it can't be that. So I've been...this isn't on like my social media in the same way, but I've recently gotten into Bravo. And it's not even because...I am really into pop culture, but I've never been a Bravo girl. Like, I just have never, like, kept up. And so it's it's my blind spot in pop culture, when people make memes, when people have references, like it is my blind spot and like, I don't want that. And so I'm I'm doing it for like, scientific purposes; I've I've just finished Vanderpump Rules all the way through from the beginning. And so I and I'm doing it. I need to have all the lore, I need to know how it all fits together so that I can like, also use it as like, references and understand like this area because it's a massive part of pop culture. And so that is my current like...not obsession, but like kind of mission right now. It is research.

JVN // Have you watched Housewives yet?! I know I need to get into it—maybe we can take the plunge together.

ANNIE WU HENRY // So Housewives is like the most daunting because there's so much of it. But I think I'm going to do like Summer House and Winter House, and then I'm going to do Housewives. I think that's perhaps the order just because I feel like I can, like, pump out Summer house. Also as as a Pennsylvania girly, like someone brought this up to me recently that like, there should be a "Housewives of the Main Line" and I'm for it. I don't know what Housewives is yet...like I know, I know enough. I've seen enough of the videos. I've seen the the daughter crying video, like I know who went to prison...like, I know the basics.

JVN // What's a recent Today I Learned moment for you?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I think like...this isn't a new learning, but it's just like, was a good reminder, that the other day I was talking to... I met a new person. It was like a relative of a friend of mine. And they are a Democrat; they support a lot of the same things I do. And they were just talking about some different candidates and some different things that I was just like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa." And like, I didn't know there were people that supported the person that they said. Like, in real life, I hadn't met one yet. I had only seen them as like memes and on social media. Then I like explained some of like potentially why they would not want to support those candidates or whatever it was, and they just had no idea. And so it's always good to like...kind of scary, but good reminder of like talking to people and like the misinformation that can happen.

JVN // What's a meme or GIF that made you LOL recently?

ANNIE WU HENRY // So we're coming off the night of the VMAs and so there's a lot of content that comes from that. And not to bring everything back to Taylor Swift, but to bring everything back to Taylor Swift: whenever she's at these awards shows in her recent years, like, I think because she's just like, feels good and comfortable in herself now, like, she just is always having the best time. And all of the, like little videos of her, just like singing along and having like...I love those. I also—because of the Kylie/Timothee Chalamet, like all of that—all of the old videos of Timothee Chalamet coming up on my feed of him, like dancing, like all of the...there's so many different references that you can have, but like his digital footprint and like who he is today is like, so honestly commendable. And like, I...if he can do it, like anyone can do it. Like the, the pipeline of like his digital footprint is just so funny to me. And whenever the videos pop up like...it didn't say it, but it's like, I love it.

Like I love those old videos; like be cringy, be earnest, like do all the things that you love doing.

JVN // If you were still working on the Fetterman campaign, could you have made a viral moment from the Timothée and Kylee outings?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I don't know. I'm sure there's some tie that we could have. Very honestly, I like one thing— I think they did a great job of like the media and then like, putting it out of like his recent response about McCarthy's like bogus impeachment of President Biden—of John's reaction with like spirit, spooky fingers and the like, “Oooooo,” like that was just such a funny, fun moment. And I'm glad that it was like, highlighted and like, everyone got to see it.

JVN // We're all about joy and queer joy here. What's a moment of joy we can end on—something that's made you happy lately, or something that's coming up?

ANNIE WU HENRY // I'm about to go and have a weekend with some of my friends, like some of my long time friends, and celebrate. And it's just like always nice to kind of log off and do things offline. And I've gotten to do a lot of that this summer, a little bit in preparation for knowing that next summer is likely not going to be that way, going into a presidential year. But like, I've gotten to spend a lot of time with like the people, new and old, in my life, like also over the last year, like just from the campaign in politics, whatever. Like I've just met so many incredible people, like outside of their like work, that are just like good humans. And so getting to like, actually spend time...I think one thing that surprises people is that like, I'm on my phone way less like... I just I like, I'm a big quality time girl. And so just getting to do that. And so I'm looking forward to that. And I've enjoyed getting to do a lot of that this summer.

JVN // You told us that you actually keep your phone in “Do Not Disturb” regularly! Tell us more—are we about to finish this episode with a life-changing hot tip?!

ANNIE WU HENRY // So I had to go into settings and I learned that like if you're on, “Do Not Disturb: it automatically, send people to voicemail. And I don't want that because if I'm getting a call, I want to be able to see if I should take the call or not. But keeping things, like I know who I'm going to be hearing from, like my phone is always in my hand. And so, like for the most part, like if I need to respond to something, if I like, I will get... like I will do it. It's not that “Do Not Disturb” means like I'm not working or I'm not like checking things. It's more of just like for my personal... like not always having the notifications, just like constantly popping up. Like having people when they go in and they see honestly that it says like, “Annie's on Do Not...” like is it important? Like, is it? And I think that it's just it's just a boundary that like, I like doing for myself. And I think that as I have had to be more online and on my phone from a professional aspect, also from like a personal professional aspect and like all of these things, like, I've gotten a lot healthier on these platforms, actually—which is probably surprising to people—but it's because I've had to do it or else, like you can just go nuts. And so, yes, I highly recommend being on, which is probably a hot take but I, I like have “Do Not Disturb” on, I have read receipts on for everyone like I don't know... I think it's just like over-communicating what I need, but like in a little digital visual way.

JVN // I love that tip, and I loved this conversation! Is there anything we missed?

ANNIE WU HENRY // No, I loved. But I said that, like, I'm always the political, love pop culture, love making things political even. I mean, everything's political. But I... Jonathan and I have met before. The reason was, it was when I lived in New York, and I went to this show and I asked probably the only political question at the Q&A. And it's because I was I was a gymnast for, like, my entire life. And that was when the Larry Nassar stuff was really happening, and USA Gymnastics stuff. And like USA Gymnastics at the time was just like not handling things well. And I asked what their take was on it. So.

JVN // OMG, I cannot believe that!

ANNIE WU HENRY // Yeah. So yeah.

JVN // What's next for you and how can we follow along?

ANNIE WU HENRY // Personally, I am Annie A-N-N-I-E underscore Wu, W-U underscore 22 on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X what....literally whatever will pop up that is that is my at that I made when I was 14 years old, and that will stay my at forever. And then with the work that I'm doing, I'm doing work for the AAPI Victory Fund. I'm doing work with the Working Families Party, particularly in Pennsylvania. And there's some—like we talked about—really important races like the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, elections coming up. So any work there...and then also just, you know, supporting Democrat and progressive candidates up and down the ballot is something that I just like personally have a vested interest in. And young people, particularly in this space, obviously, with the caveat of like with ideologies and things that still align, but like supporting that on local, state and national levels, is just a blanket great thing that I always recommend and just getting involved. So...

JVN // Annie, thank you so much for coming on Curious Now!

ANNIE WU HENRY // I really appreciate you having me. This is, this is so fun. And yea, just loved chatting.