

## Struggles During a Pandemic

Living through a pandemic is something I never imagined that I would go through. I remember watching the news and learning about Covid-19 and how it was a virus spreading all over China. I did not expect the virus to spread to other countries, including the United States. Once the virus reached the U.S., I was in disbelief and shock when I saw that the number of cases and deaths increased by the day. Seeing how the virus was affecting many people, I was worried for my grandma, who could be at more significant risk due to a recent transplant that she had undergone and her immune system not being as strong. The virus has impacted many people, including students who had to endure a change in their life.

On March 13, I received an email from President Conoley explaining the situation of Covid-19 and that classes would be switch to online for the rest of the semester due to the spread of the virus. Aside from President Conoley sending an email, my professors sent one as well, explaining how the course online would be managed. At first, I was happy knowing that I would be at home where it is safe, but I felt disconnected from my studies in reality. Although I had class online, it was not the same as the in-class lectures where I could meet new people and interact with my peers. Out of the four classes that I was taking during the semester, only two held lectures on zoom. Classes felt easy for the most part, but I missed going to class and having a professor present their powerpoints and provide any additional feedback that they might have missed in the lecture. For instance, some professors gave stories based on the topic taught to have a visual example. On the other hand, I also miss group projects and stepping foot on campus. Being on campus and spending time in that environment gave me a sense of freedom and joy in using my day at school.

Being on lockdown, I slowly started to not feel like myself. I felt cut off from society, bored, scared, and even depressed. I did not enjoy my stay at home for the first couple of months. Staying at home with my family lead to different emotions, mostly since we were accustomed to either going to work or school. Being together, 24/7 felt like we did not have our personal space anymore, and arguments would arise. As time passed and we got comfortable with lockdown, we could accommodate by giving each other space. With these emotions, I tried to look for new hobbies that would get my mind off of Covid. I ordered a small box of paint by number, which allowed me to paint different portraits and helped me feel relaxed while enjoying my day at home. As a big fan of puzzles, I bought a 2000 piece puzzle that would help exercise my brain analytically and logically. While doing puzzles, I managed to get my mind to focus on something fun rather than the sadness that is happening around the world. Furthermore, to keep me motivated and healthy, I went to the garage to lift weights and exercise. Keeping myself busy has benefited me when living through a pandemic, but it does not always keep my mind away from seeing the significant effects that have risen.

In addition, during the lockdown, conflicts arose that affected many people around the world. For instance, a major event that occurred was the Black Lives Matter movement, in which many people around the world participated in protest following the death of George Floyd. I remember watching the video of Floyd being pinned to the floor with the officer's knee pressed against Floyd's neck and tearing up, thinking how it is the year 2020, but we are still living in the past. Although there was a pandemic, people still went on to protest to make their voices heard that given the situation, violence and systemic racism against Black people still exist. This movement has become a global network and has continued to show the many Black lives that have been lost due to violence in the hands of U.S. police officers. Seeing the thousands of

marchers fighting against police brutality from Belgium to London to Seoul to Sydney and many more was astonishing. I could not believe that the world we were living in was uniting together to fight against the violence and racism that many Black people face daily. As bad as I wanted to protest, I could not risk getting Covid-19 and spreading the virus to my family members, specifically my grandma. Instead, I donated some money to the foundation and hoped that I could still make a difference with the little I contributed. As protesters continue to march, businesses start to open again with strict measures amid Covid-19.

With the many closed businesses starting from March and now opening, I felt like society was slowly beginning to look normal again. However, as locations began to open, being closed lead many people to lose their jobs and stores to go out of business. A close friend of mine lost her job two months after just being hired. When she got laid off, she felt regret leaving her first job and not knowing whether she would pay her bills on time, seeing how more people were laid off. This situation was difficult for many people, mainly for people who have a family and must support their spouse and children, and a single individual who has to pay off debt, tuition, or bills. As for my friend, her parents helped her with her financial situation until she got another job. Although normalcy was slowly approaching, we still had to wear masks in public, which I did not mind as long as I was safe. I would hang out with friends, but we would not go to public areas with many people because we were still a little afraid of the virus. Instead, we drove around the city and talked about things that were going on. When driving throughout the city, we passed the many hangout spots we would spend our weekends at, for instance, in movie theaters, restaurants, coffee shops, night clubs, and even the beach. Seeing how these places were where we socialized and hung out in large crowds, I cannot seem to wrap my head around. Those large crowds were part of our everyday life, but that is gone now; keeping six feet from each other is

now the new normal. Spending time with my friends and talking to them felt good and seemed like we had not seen each other in years.

As a result, living through a pandemic has taught me valuable points, such as not taking school, friends, family, or life for granted because, in a blink of an eye everything can change. Covid-19 impacted the world, causing a change that affected many families. However, having change and fighting for what is right has brought the world together. The disbelief and worries we felt at the beginning of March cannot compete with what we have achieved eight months later. No one imagined a year build with chaos, but at the end of the day, we are getting through it together.