

05/18/2020

My name is Hennessy Alizae Hernandez and I will be graduating from SJSU, this Friday. Since this pandemic occurred, I felt as if my life changed drastically. It all started when Santa Clara County went under lockdown. I was sitting down at work when our boss came over to us and told us “this is your last shift.” I come from a low-income family; therefore, I do not get any financial help from anyone. I take out loans, apply to scholarships, receive grants, and have a part-time job. I didn’t know how I was going to pay my bills or if my family back in Los Angeles will make ends meet. As a senior at SJSU, I knew our graduation wouldn’t happen. We were all just waiting to receive an email from President Mary A. Papazian. It was extremely hard from every student as we worked hard to receive our bachelor’s degree. I, myself, worked hard all four years and this was the big moment. To be able to walk across the stage, in our cap and gowns, making our family proud. It was a once in a lifetime moment. I lived in CVB and had to move back home. My mom is a widow, with four kids. My dad passed away a week after my eighth grade graduation and it has been a struggle for my mom. My mom works at a retirement home and got her hours cut down, due to COVID-19. On top of that, she is putting herself at risk with this virus. Our main priority has been to afford rent and have food on the table. Being the oldest sibling, I had to figure it out and instantly apply for jobs. While in the process of searching for jobs, I was finishing up my undergrad all via Zoom. I have never taken online classes before so this was a huge transition. It was difficult to focus, stay on top of things, and even be able to learn the material. One of my professors chose not to teach through Zoom, he just sent all the lectures. We still had a final exam for his class and I didn’t believe it was fair. It wasn’t fair because he didn’t teach us anything once we were under lockdown. We were just supposed to

review the lectures and learn on our own. As a Public Health major, I thought professors would be more understanding while in a pandemic. How am I paying for an in-person class that switches to online, but the professor isn't going virtual? It almost feels like us as students got scammed.

As I move back home to Los Angeles, I have to adapt to online classes while not having privacy. I am from South Central LA and live in a one-bedroom apartment. There is tons of chaos going around the neighborhood, and in the household. I have been connecting to my hotspot on my phone in order to connect to wifi. None of this is easy. I try to stay positive because I know this will end soon. Everything will go back to normal. I am one day away from being done with my undergrad and I don't feel the excitement. I don't feel like I am graduating because my last semester came to an end sooner than I thought. Everyone has had their struggles throughout this pandemic from millions filing for unemployment to all businesses being closed. I am grateful to have found a part-time job to help my family out. I will be taking summer classes and it will be online. These are my pre-reqs for nursing school and it will challenge me twice as hard. No one knows when this pandemic will be over, but I hope soon. It saddens me to see many families suffering and trying to make ends meet. The government is barely helping people in need, while those who are undocumented do not receive the stimulus checks.

COVID-19 really opened up my eyes on how the government is reacting to this serious situation. It has been extremely hard to adjust to everything but we are taking things day by day.