

Food for Thought: Life During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The coronavirus pandemic has truly turned our world upside down. I find it challenging to operate day-to-day when you never know what breaking news headlines will shake up the world next. It is frustrating to know that the majority of people, including myself, did not take it seriously until the impact of the situation started to affect our daily lives. The pandemic has, directly and indirectly, influenced me as I do not think I fully understood the severity of the situation until relatively recently. COVID-19 has changed almost every aspect of my life, and I feel that life will never be like it was before this pandemic occurred moving forward. It has caused our communities, our country, and our world to reevaluate everything from such as the freedoms we have, health care accessibility, and even what we value most in life. Even though I know I should consider myself fortunate because I am not drastically impacted financially or health-wise, I cannot help but feel like I have lost everything due to coronavirus. I did not realize how great life was for me until so many things I love about my life were swiftly taken away.

As a graduating senior, I have missed out on many rites of passage that seniors expect when they round out their four years – the commencement, goodbyes to friends, and other senior year traditions. I know that this situation is no more difficult than what others are facing in light of COVID-19, but it is heartbreaking not to feel as rewarded for all the work you put in. All the courses I had been taking in-person abruptly switched to remote learning, and the mental strain associated with complying with public health orders, among other lifestyle interruptions, has been like no other. It has been a hard adjustment going from the independence and routine of college life to not being able to leave my house and doing all my classes online. At first, the shift to online courses felt as if reality was turning into a bad dream as my motivation tanked, and it became harder to be engaged in lectures and not procrastinate on homework assignments. I

developed a new routine and adjusted more and more to distance learning and complete the semester, but heavily relied on digital communication with peers to keep me sane and grounded.

This pandemic made me realize how I take many things for granted. In such unprecedented times, I am lucky to have a home and a steady supply of food and other essentials. I am lucky to be in relatively good health and have a family in a similar state as well. I am lucky to have recognized and understand the privileges behind the ability to take this situation and turn it into an opportunity for self-care and improvement. I am lucky to be living in the Bay Area, as their demonstrative leadership has saved not only my life but those of my fellow residents. I am lucky to have the friends, family, and loved ones I have in my life and the times I have and will continue to cherish them. I am lucky that through it all, I can witness how heartwarming and beautiful it is for people to come together and reconnect in the midst of us all social distancing. I am lucky to have realized just how significant it is to be physically sitting next to classmates in lectures and study groups, friends in social gatherings, and enjoying the outside world in general. I am ultimately fortunate to be alive today and live the life I do with its many evident privileges.

This pandemic is exposing and deepening the inequities in our society, disproportionately affecting underserved communities. I am lucky enough that both my parents are considered essential workers. Still, I feel devastated for the millions of people facing unemployment and economic insecurity. Especially for the campus community, SJSU students are facing even greater disparities in their education than ever before. As the world overcomes this pandemic, I have a newfound sense of hope in our adversity to prosper through difficult times. I wish that the world comes out of this pandemic kinder, more understanding, and humbled. Nevertheless, most importantly, I hope we do not turn a blind eye to those who lost their lives and most affected. Until then, I am counting my blessings, staying positive, and doing my part by social distancing.