

Like many years 2020 began like any other year for me well for the most part this year started off wonderfully. I had just arrived back home a few days after the new year after visiting my family and meeting and seeing my grandmother for the first time in 12 years! My 2020 had started off exciting, visiting a new country, trying new foods and creating beautiful memories with my family that I will treasure forever. Life was good, I came back to California with new knowledge of the world but no one could have seen what the next weeks would bring. My 2020 started off like any other weekend. I arrived home early Sunday morning suitcases in hand while my brother parked the car out in the back. I hugged my mom after not seeing her for two weeks and began to unpack all while showing her all the cool stuff I had brought from Mexico, including the gifts, snacks and the alcohol I had bought from the famous Ex-Hacienda Tequilera in Guanajuato. That same morning after getting in a few hours of sleep to help deal with my jet lag, we woke up and proceeded to go to our local laundromat and began our usual routine of doing laundry on the weekends. After making sure to send our cousins messages to tell them we had arrived safely back home, it was then that I decided to catch up on our local news, after all I loved being informed about everything that had happened and was happening while I was away on vacation. When I opened up Twitter one topic on the trending page caught my eye right away: Coronavirus. I'm not one who likes to click on every single trending topic, but for some reason I did. The images, tweets, and videos shared by people in hospitals, doctors running to care for sick patients and people pleading for help and others wondering what was going on filled me with horror and worry. I too was left wondering "What is going on?" I remember telling myself "Keep tabs on it, this could be serious." I also remember telling family and friends what was going on in Wuhan for weeks. My family and friends call me "La reportera" or "the reporter" because I am always "reporting" the news. Unfortunately, no one paid much attention to it, but I did. I remember the worried feeling I had when the US began to report the first few cases of coronavirus cases here in LA County. I guess you could say that I was one of the first people to realize that something bad was going to happen. I tried to ignore my feeling of worry, since I am easily overwhelmed I decided not to try to pay much attention to the matter but as the cases began to grow, countries beginning to see a spike of COVID19 cases and Wuhan at the center of attention globally I simply couldn't ignore it any longer. Skip to March 2020 and COVID19 was finally a household name. It was finally here. I remember it was a sunny March 13, 2020 I was on my way home after ending my morning classes on my college campus. I remember the date and time so well. I was on the bus nearing my stop when my phone buzzed notifying a single tweet. The headline read "BREAKING NEWS: President Trump to declare Coronavirus a Pandemic" That single tweet made my entire blood stop. I remember having chills run down my body. I wanted to scream, I wanted to cry, I felt scared. "How? How could this happen?" Those thoughts crossed my mind. After getting off on my stop, I wanted to run home, hug my mom, and tell her how scared and anxious I felt. I didn't. I told myself to take a deep breath and calm down. I did my usual after school routine, I went to my local donut shop, purchased an Iced coffee and walked home, all while still feeling that fear. When I got home, I found my parents home in the kitchen talking. The look on my face must have said it all because they asked me

what was wrong and I just blurted out “The coronavirus is now a pandemic.” I guess I should explain why I felt anxious and scared. I, along with my mom and brother, have a respiratory illness, I have asthma. As someone who’s dealt with two different types of pneumonia and suffered an asthma attack when I was 11 years old, I know first hand how pneumonia can be painful and is something that NO ONE should have to ever contract in their lifetime. I will admit, I cried. The fear of the unknown was something we all felt when President Trump walked into the conference room and, in front of various reporters he officially declared COVID19 a pandemic. Everything happened so quickly, people began to panic, #COVID19, PANDEMIC and #CORONAVIRUS were the three main trending topics on twitter. Days later, #PanicBuying was one of the trending topics too. People bought out all the pasta, canned foods, water, and yes, even toilet paper. It was a stressful month, but nothing can compare to the first two weeks after the first stay at home order was issued. Food in stores was scarce, water was limited, and hand sanitizer was all out. And for weeks on end, there was no toilet paper. I remember the looks of anger, stress and fear on people who visited stores. I felt it too, but my anger wasn’t directed at the virus, but at those who panicked and bought everything. It was their own selfish greed where I read stories about elderly people not having enough food or much needed supplies, I also saw videos and pictures of elderly people crying and what angered me the most was a story I read that dare I say, some people would steal from this elderly woman’s shopping cart everytime she turned her back to get something off the shelf. I remember feeling disgusted and ashamed at how we as a society acted. Instead of being united and helping one another we turned to being selfish, the saying “Every man for themselves” unfortunately was applied to this very scene and the month of March. The transition to online learning was stressful too. People say in this day and age technology is advanced, but I disagree. We went from learning in a classroom full of people to learning how to navigate across Zoom. It was stressful enough trying to take down notes (anyone else still copy and write down notes instead of taking pictures on their phones?) and dealing with a website that crashed every five minutes. Needless to say I dropped a few classes. People never knew how much a pandemic could impact people’s everyday lives. That may sound ignorant and you might be thinking “Well what about the spanish flu? The black plague?” Yes, we study it in history but no one could have seen so much stress, worry, fear and anxiety a pandemic can actually have unless you live through one. That constant fear and thoughts such as will I get it? When will I get it? And if I do, what am I going to do? What about my family? Will I survive? Is something that ran through my mind every single day. I even lost sleep. I became depressed. I stressed out. I wouldn’t let my parents go to the store alone because of the chaotic scenes that we would see on the news. It took weeks for people to finally “adjust” and calm down. Stores are filled with toilet paper, there is enough food, supplies, etc. but now we are faced with a few new issues: an unavoidable recession and reopening of counties and states. I’m not going to lie, I’m scared. Scared that, when we reopen, am I going to fall ill? Am I going to contract the virus or will one of my family members who suffer from asthma like me contract it? The fear of the unknown is something we all share in this day and age and at the time of writing this, plans are being made to reopen LA County. I am against it, my school plans to reopen soon

even after two employees tested positive for coronavirus but what people fail to understand is the inevitable 2nd wave. Just because we're reaching summer this is a new virus. This virus has no cure (as of right now) with new symptoms being reported and just comes to show how this virus can be deadly towards anyone. I guess you can say I'm angry and upset that people who suffer from illnesses, not just asthma are being cast aside and expected to "continue to stay home." How is that possible when we, like everyone else must go to work, get our supplies, and for those who don't have washing machines, must go to laundromats? Money is tight and not everyone has the luxury of ordering in or having people shop for us. We are most at risk and honestly it sometimes feels like our own lives aren't being considered. Trust me, as much as I would LOVE to see and hang out with friends, family, and dine in at restaurants this isn't a time to give into our temptations or assume that the virus would "go away soon." As a few people have stated on social media "the pandemic is not over just because you're bored." These are times where we should ALL be doing our part to stay home. Yes, people are angry and frustrated and want to go back to work but we must ask ourselves "Is money so important that you'd risk your own life or your family's life?" These are tough times, but we must understand that pandemics can have long lasting impacts not just economically but emotionally, psychically and mentally. Don't get me wrong after all the negative we can focus on the positive. I mentioned above how this pandemic exposed the greediness of people but with all the negative comes the positive. Soon after the chaotic scenes of people panic buying, we began to see acts of kindness, acts that, unfortunately, are so rare to see in a generation full of-in my opinion at least-selfish people. We saw people shopping for the elderly who were afraid to go into stores for fear of people stealing their items or getting knocked over, people donating food and masks, and people sharing words of encouragement and kindness. And like usual I cried seeing all the beautiful acts of kindness, especially towards the elderly. One day, when I look back at this I want to tell my children and grandchildren that while all of this chaoticness was happening, I want them to focus on the good. Because while there was a lot of bad, a lot of fear, and a lot of stress there were people out there who encouraged others and inspired others to do random acts of kindness without expecting anything in return. I want my children and future descendants and others to read this and know that even though at the time of writing we are still seeing the numbers of COVID19 cases rising and facing anxiety over the reopening of the county, there are still people who are continuing to do random acts of kindness and people who are still abiding with social distancing. I want people to remember those who died weren't just numbers, they were real life people, beautiful souls taken too soon. I hope that anyone who reads this or future generations who read this learn from our mistakes, pandemics are no joke and social distancing orders are put up for reasons. Pandemics also expose the ugliness in people they never thought would be exposed but they also highlight the beautiful side of those who keep others' health and wellbeing in mind and follow guidelines. One thing I want people to remember that in a time of darkness, we must all unite, we can all overcome this pandemic if we work together. With that being said I will leave these two quotes that I feel resonate with us during this difficult and stressful time.

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy.” -Martin Luther King Jr.

“In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity.” -Sun Tsu