

Matthew Amos D'Souza

Professor Brewer

ENG 102: Spring 2020

Online Contribution

3 April 2020

A Koi in New Waters

(The life of a university student during the COVID-19 pandemic)

My “normal” life is a bit hard to define, but if I were to choose a something to relate it to, I would say the swimming of a koi. Always swimming, yet never staying on one path, always changing with the flow of the water, or changing based on where the food is. The main idea is that a koi does not have a set path and does not know what waters will flow against it, only what it must do to stay alive. And that sort of relates to me, I don't know what normal is to say, my life is always changing always changing direction never sticking to one path. Like a koi I go where I want, do what I must, and continue moving forward through the waters of life. And like a koi, I am rarely alone through my swim through life, I have friends and family that provide me companionship on this journey. And up till now I was unable to define what a normal lifestyle for me is outside of basic human needs like eating, sleeping, and breathing. But I wasn't always able to define or even relate my life to something or some idea, only thanks to the Coronavirus, also known as Covid-19, that I am now able to so.

Through my years in high school I had a few changes here and there, but nothing to major. I would go to school, go through all my classes come home, struggle sometimes to finish

my homework, then do whatever I wanted with my free time. Which typically involved me playing some sort of videogame or watching some sort of program as my parents didn't typically let me out of the house. They were very protective of the son and didn't want him to get hurt, how lovely. But that was my norm, even before high school, it was my norm from the start of my education, to the end of my mandatory education. And even though I did struggle a bit, I did grow from it and became stronger like a koi that swims upstream to get to destination of a better, bigger pond. My bigger, better pond was the freedom and relief that came when I graduated from high school. The excitement and joy were overwhelming, however, just like a koi, I didn't want to stay in that one place forever because I saw something incredible, my future, a blank slate that could lead to greater things. That's when I enrolled into college. This was going to be an uphill battle, or in the case of a koi swim against the river to reach the peak of the Yellow River, and I was ready for anything, or so I thought.

The first day into university and I was completely alone, no parents telling me what to do, or when to go to sleep, I was released from my tank and released into the wild. And I would be lying if I said I was ready for the first wave that came over me. I struggled to find my direction at first, but I soon found my senses and was making decent progress upstream towards my goal, but no sooner did I finally settle in to my "normal" life, did life decide to throw a rock into the river and throw me off course. That rock was the Coronavirus, something that one of my friends had told me about briefly when it was wreaking havoc in China. My first thought was that it was going to be something like the Ebola virus, a dangerous virus, but something that wouldn't spread far on a global scale. And before it even calms down, we will make a few jokes and memes about it, and eventually it will recede and will leaving nothing more than a footnote, and a few memes in its wake. However, that mentality was rapidly changed after it spread to the

United States and started to spread fast. At first, I thought that it would be okay, that nothing major would happen. That all changed when I was coming back from Spring Break, I had received an email stating that classes would be online for the next couple of weeks, and against the wishes of my parents I had returned. I didn't what drew me back at first, but slowly as the weeks went by, I began to realize what had drawn me back to the university. When I first came back, I spent some time cleaning up my room and getting prepared for what was to come next, afterwards I went to go see my friends that were living in a different building. I was shocked to see that many of them had returned from home, I wasn't expecting many of them to return until the two weeks had passed. But astonishing as that was it wasn't long until they too decided or were forced to leave. A majority of friends were forced to leave, whether it be because of their parents or because of the living situations that they were placed in, some left on their own accord because they felt that being here would serve no purpose. And eventually due to my friends leaving plus the new regulations for students living on campus, I became confined to my studio size apartment/dormitory, only leaving to get food. However, I soon found myself wondering why I continue staying at the dormitories instead of going home, why do I willingly confine myself to this small room, barely going outside? Why do I stay here, unable to see my friends, and slowly destroying myself? Why, I asked; and to that end I found the answer I sought. The answer being that I didn't want to go home. If I went home, I would do nothing more than stay inside my room and be on my laptop for the entire day. And while I adore my family there are times where I wish to be alone for a while. So that is what I am doing, I stay within my room and do whatever work I have to do, and I do make sure to call my parents everyday to make sure that I am alright. This way I can focus on my work and still be in contact with them to give an update on how I am doing. Not to mention for my own personal health, less people around me means

less of a chance I will get infect. As for my own mental health, that is something different altogether, while I do miss the companionship of my friends and the variety of life that I witness every day, it is better that being stuck in a room with a lot of people that all anxious to return to there normal lifestyle. And I would be lying if I were to say that I am not anxious enough to be back to my original life before all of this. A life in which I don't have to have conversations with a screen separating me from my family, friends, classmates, professors, etc. A life where I am free to go out when I want, and with whoever I want. Until then life will continue to come at me, and I will press on like the koi that swims fervently upstream to reach the peak of the river. I know that when I come out of this, not only will I have gained some important experiences, but also some interesting stories.