

The Start of the Pandemic for Me

This time has made many of us realize that we share more than we knew and wanted. We all share the need for a social life, money, food, and freedom. During this time, we have all been forced to lock ourselves in our homes and have been limited in our everyday activities. From one day to the next we were forced to close schools, cancel sporting events, close all theatres, gyms, and restaurants. Now we constantly must hear a message telling us that we need to wash our hands with water and soap for 20 seconds. It feels as if our world has been turned upside down. Many aspects of our lives have been changed and taken away from us. We are living in a world now where we miss our family and friends' hugs and kisses and their physical presence in our lives. We are now given the time to think about things that we have never thought of before and do things we have never thought of doing. Everyone is handling this quarantine differently.

My first day of quarantine was not very scary or chaotic because my sister had told me and my mom in advance that we should not wait for things to get worse for us to get ready. In advance we already went grocery shopping and to buy cleaning supplies. When we saw the news saying that we will have to be in quarantine I took things calmly because I knew that freaking out was not going to be helpful in anyway. But then I became worried when I remembered my grandmother is just getting out of the hospital from brain surgery and it is getting antibiotics through an IV. I become worried because she will have people coming in the house to take out blood and change the dressing on her IV. I was worried what this would mean for her health. We figured out a way to keep her safe and then began making a schedule for myself. My family and I decided that we will stay home and make the best of the time we can finally spend together. We even come up with an exercise plan for us to stay healthy during this time. I was happy that I will

get to spend all day watching my dog sleep. My online learning has been a rollercoaster ride. Since day one I thought I would be prepared, and I would be able to make a schedule and stay concentrated on completing all my work on time. In the first two weeks I felt confident that I would be successful in all that was thrown at me, and I was but I had the constant worry of what was happening in the world and hoping for this to pass as soon as possible. My online learning has been full of writing assignments, reading forty and more pages from books for my classes every day and writing different readings responses and answering questions. So, I pushed myself to get everything done. But then the next week my online learning has become not what I expected it to be. I feel as if everything began to pile up on me and was pressured to finish all my assignments on time and as expected from my professors. There are so many people getting tested in being at the hospital that the test was not available for them. According to the hospital they had run out of tests and were no longer doing testing. They were told at the hospital that the chances of them being positive for COVID-19 was not high but even if they were positive all they could do is go home and be in self- quarantine. This shows just how scary this has become for not only my family but millions of families all over the world. They become my main priority along with my assignments for my classes and it has not been easy to balance. Even though I have not been having the best time while worrying about my family's health I have been keeping up with all my work, so I am proud of myself.

It's only the second or third week of quarantine and things appear as if they will never get better and the constant reports on the pandemic going around the world is creating even more fear in all over the world. Even worse than being physically sick, people are also becoming psychologically sick. People are starting to have problems with anxiety, depression, sleep and panic. My cousin has been able to sleep for the past three weeks, he has high cholesterol and is at

risk of diabetes so he fears that he will get COVID-19 and he will not be able to survive it. He told me that he feels that this is worse than a war. He is afraid of what can happen to us. He told me he feels as if he is an animal stuck in a cage and has no freedom. When he sleeps for some hours, he wakes up with nightmares. I am so worried about him he is losing a lot of sleep and is getting a lot of anxiety. This week he has only slept for five hours. If the people of the city do not cooperate by staying home and listening to what the government is saying to do. If we do what we are asked to do, we can see an actual change happening.

I constantly tell my mom that she should not go out to work, that it is becoming more dangerous every day to think about her health and how other members of the family have been feeling during this time that they have been sick. But she tells me that she is an essential worker, and she needs to go to work not only to be able to bring money home but because the people she takes care of need her. I have made it my responsibility to take care of her, so I make her different teas daily such as ginger tea. She drinks tea every night before going to bed and rests early so she can be healthy and be well rested. I have also bought her masks that I have found available and hands sanitizer. We have tried our best to keep her safe and healthy and we hope it can stay this way. This Friday I was able to speak with one of my cousins that were send home after going to the hospital with respiratory problems, headache, back ache and fevers and were told to just stay home, even though they were not tested because they were told it was not needed. So, my cousin has been in quarantine with no contact with anything or anyone on the outside. He has been struggling with eating and drinking but we told him that if he does not eat and drink things his wife is giving him, he will not get better. It was great to receive a call from him telling us he was feeling much better and that everything was going well at home. We want to see him, but we know this is not possible right now. His wife also began to show some

symptoms, but she has been drinking tea and eating healthily and she has managed to get better. His mother was hospitalized because she was diagnosed with pneumonia, but she was released from the hospital Friday. She is still scared because she is still having respiratory problems, but she is a lot better. I am glad that most of my family who were sick are getting better and I can communicate with them at least over the phone. Even though we are being deprived of our freedom we must make the best of it for our own health.

It feels as if we will never be able to get out of this dark period. This has impacted my sister in another way since this was her senior year of high school and we were hoping that she would be able to go back to school to have her last memories with her friends. It makes me and my mom sad for her because she will not be able to have her prom, senior carnival and graduation that would have been her last memories with her friends. We are also sad about it because we will not be able to hear her name being announced at graduation and seeing her walk across the stage, seeing how far she has come in the last couple of years. She feels sad about it, but she says if she receives her diploma, she will be fine. Her other classmates were not so happy about it, they all made it their task to post all over their social media how this makes them feel. They have all complained in every way they can, but their safety is more important. Like her we hope that things can get better soon, and we can celebrate her and her accomplishments.

This fourth week has been a week full of surprises and shock. Earlier this week it was the first time that I have come out of my house in two months, I was kind of forced by my sister to go out because according to her I need it to go somewhere and see other people because it will be bad for my health to be locked away in my house. As my sister drove and my mom was making some calls, I was shocked to look out the window and see that there was no traffic in Jamaica Avenue where it was always cars. We had to go to the pharmacy for my sister's medicine as my

sister parked and I saw more people come out. I saw that everyone was wearing gloves and masks. It felt as if these things had become part of our wardrobe. My mom got out of the car and ran to the pharmacy. There was a pregnant woman that was not wearing her mask correctly and I wanted to go out the car and telling her but the man she was with seemed to realize and fixed it himself. Her belly was popping out her shirt, it seemed as if the shirt did not fit her. As soon as my mom came out of the pharmacy, we drove quickly back home where I felt safer and cleaner. My home has become my safe place and a place where I feel comfortable, where I feel safe doing my tutoring, assignments, cooking, and workouts.

This week I was able to see just how much impact this pandemic has not only had on my family but on my whole borough. I live in Queens and have a family in Brooklyn who I often visit, and these have been the boroughs that have been impacted by this pandemic. In the mornings there are two to no one on the sidewalks walking and little cars on the streets as the days progress more cars pass on the most transited streets by my house. I have not seen my neighbors in so long I am starting to miss them. Many of the stores in my neighborhood remain closed, most Deli stores are closed, all banks, pharmacies and supermarkets remain open. When returning from the pharmacy there was a long line at Chase Bank since everyone was trying to take out the money they had received from the government. And people were not keeping social distance, it was very frustrating to see that people are not able to follow rules from their own health.

The rest of my week was easy-going and hidden away at home, enjoying my time with my sister trying to learn new recipes to cook. We have not been very successful at them, they have not been good so far, but they were edible. Saturday was a family day with my sister and mother, we spent all day cleaning the house and cooking. We got a delivery of Ceviche made by

my grandmother. I do not like eating too much because of the shrimp but I still ate it, it was the second time in months that I had been able to eat something made by her.

Ecuador has been another country that has been hit by the virus. My family is from Latacunga, and they do not have many cases like Quito and Guayaquil, but they are still being affected because they are losing money and are still at risk of obtaining the virus. In Guayaquil many people are being left in the streets to die and after death they are left inside their homes until they are picked up or their family members are taking their dead family members out to be burned in the street. My mother, sister and I have decided to send some money for my family that is in more need. They do not have enough money to buy groceries to eat. They are not able to get any income from their businesses. While watching the news at night my mother told me that they had decided to shut down the subway because this form of transportation was believed to be the main reason for New York City being the city that has been affected most by the virus. This was the best decision being made this far but I think this should have been done a long time ago.

I remember an event; it was a very stressful day that gave me a very bad headache. I was woken up by my sister at 6:30 am to go with her and my mom to BJs. We all rushed because we realized we had to make the line to enter BJs. We arrived at BJs at 7:20 am, we left my mom at the line and me and my sister went to look for parking. We stayed in the car as my mom told us to wait too not be too exposed. Not too long after we received a call from my mom that there was no longer a line to enter, that people had formed another group pushing people to be ready to enter at 8 am. Verbal arguments had begun to break out so me and my sister decided to see what we could do and what was happening. As we approached the entrance people were arguing and telling each other that they do not care who they push that they are entering no matter what. My

sister decided to ask the security guard what was happening and tell him that he was not keeping any order. She was told that first responders and senior citizens have priority between 8 am and 9 am, so they will enter no matter what. But all the people that were standing in line become frustrated after waiting since 7 o' clock in the morning they had to wait until 9 o'clock to be able to enter and they are being skipped and there is no social distancing. People were ready to fight, and the number of people began to grow. People kept arguing and the security guards were not keeping things under control, instead they remained inside the mall. So, my sister decided to call the police, she reported that a fight was going to break out and there was no social distancing.

Two NYPD cars soon showed up and began to put order, first responders and senior citizens were told that they will need to show ID to be able to enter first, they all began to enter but there was still no social distancing everyone was on top of one another and the line my mom was on just get growing. As soon as 8: 57 AM hit the guard began to say that now seniors and first responders no longer had priority and they also had to join the line. A nurse came at 9 am trying to rush in and she was sent to the back of the line, and she wanted to argue but we told her that she wanted the privilege of going in first she should have shown up sooner. Other senior citizens were also told they had to join the line. I felt bad, but we had been standing outside waiting for our turn for a long time. At around 9:20 am me and my mom were finally able to enter BJs but as we began to look for the things, we need there almost nothing left, we could not find the butter, cheese and sardine we needed. There was also limited cleaning supplies. We just bought the essentials, and we purchased the things and headed home. After this we disinfected everything, we all showered, ate breakfast and I went back to sleep because I had a horrible headache because of all the chaos I went through just to buy some groceries. I woke up from my nap and my cousin had bought us pizza and come to drop it off. I had not seen him in two

months, and I was happy to see him. I wonder how long it will be until people no longer need to wake up early to be able to buy some groceries and how long until I am able to see all my family together again.

This fifth week nothing impactful has happened to me personally but I have spent time this week not being able to sleep well. I have been going to sleep at 2:20 am the earliest, but I have been going to sleep at 5:00 am. Going to sleep this late I am still waking up at around 9 am to start my day on most days. On days like this that I just cannot sleep I just start thinking stuff happening around me, feel anxious and try to take my mind out of it by listening to music and that just made me stay even more awake. I have been drinking teas before going to bed to be able to sleep and it hasn't helped. This week I began a new strategy to stay away from any anxiety and stress during this time. I have decided to not turn on my tv for the whole day until it's time for my telenovelas. The weeks before this every channel I turned to was about COVID-19, even the media and entertainment channels were full of news about the pandemic and what it means for artist and influencers. I haven't been keeping up with any news this week or anything that is happening in the outside world. But I think is better this way people will stop being afraid including me.

My every day in the week is very light but the same time passes so fast. On days like this I had a day where I was very tired, I went to sleep at around 3:30 am and I woke up at 7:30 am like every other Tuesday since I started online learning to submit my assignments due that day for my Literature in Translation class, which I always email the assignments to my professor at 8 am. In this class I learn about literature in Italy and I like this class because of my goal to learn more Italian and the Italian culture. Then I proceeded to create my online blog post for my English class in which I must watch a video send by the professor, then write my response to the

prompt and a discussion question asked by another classmate about the reading for that class, and then respond to a classmate's response all must be done before 9:15 am. Then at 9:30 am I had to join my Zoom class for Philosophy that ends at 10:45 am and I must then post a response on Blackboard on the discussion board thread for that day. Then after this I start my chores at home. I wake up and make breakfast and my sister and I guess I can also say my dog. After we eat breakfast, I wash all our dishes for that day when it is my turn and then I clean the stove and sweep the floor of the kitchen and living room. Then I go to my room do my bed, fix my clothes, shower and then start the rest of my assignments for school. But this Tuesday I could not do anything I felt very sick and tired, so I just laid in bed and slept until I heard my mom come in the house from work. I woke up with a headache and felt dizzy, but I tried my best to get out of bed to help my mom cook. After eating I helped my sister with her pre-calculus homework since I love math. Then my night at 8:00 pm I start my daily cardio workout.

My workouts during this include cardio workouts, glutes exercise and abdominal muscles workouts, they are not easy, but they are also possible to do. I have been trying my best to do what I can. I feel comfortable doing them because my sister motivates me to continue, and she even joins me sometimes. My mom watches me to them, and she tells me motivational words for me not to give up. After two years of not working out at all I have had moments when I just want to lay in bed and just stop doing it but I know that I need the workout not only to have something to do during this time but also for my own health, days before going into total quarantine I was told by my general doctor that I needed to be more active for my health because I had gained too much weight. So, I have been pushing through with my work outs. This week I felt the most motivated to work out and make a change in the amount of activity that happens in my day. This quarantine has made me change many things about myself, but the isolation has not been easy.

Some things that I have done to try to be less isolated are being on face time with my friends. I try to text my friends and I make sure I catch up with them. I also try to be creative at home or spend time fixing the house, or just spending time doing my schoolwork. The things that have been most difficult about staying away from the outside is socializing. I miss my friends and hearing my classmates share out their ideas and experiences. I miss having the opportunity to learn something every day in person. When we used to go to class on campus, we were able to socialize with people and we were able to get dressed up and interact with different people, but now at home we do the same thing all the time. Something that I have learned during this tough time is that we human beings are the ones who do not belong in this world. We are guests, yet for hundreds of years we have acted as if this planet belongs to us. During the time that we have been in quarantine the air has cleaned up so much, violence has gone down, the oceans have cleaned up as well. We are the ones who destroy our planet, and we have taken advantage of it. We look up to billionaires, entertainers, and creators. Yet we look down on the people who must do the dirty work every day. The custodians, nurses, doctors, first responders; they are the real heroes. They are what keeps the nation going. In the future when all of this is over, I hope humans change the way they act. I hope we become wiser, more intelligent, and more appreciative. Even though it has been a difficult time, I am grateful for still being alive and healthy.

This sixth week of quarantine I went out three days out of the week was a new record for me in the last month and a half. Monday, I had a very fast day. I woke up at 8:00 am to take a walk outside since I had been told that I had to start living a normal life and go outside otherwise I will not have a good immune system in the future. I was not to convince but since I watched the news for the first time in weeks which stated that things are getting better, they were considering

opening small businesses and parks. So, I decided to go outside for a walk along with my dog. She loves to walk but since she is a Yorke, her favorite thing to do is bark at others so she did most of that for the time we were outside. We walked for 30 minutes but she got tired, and I felt scared that I was wearing a mask, but she was not protected at all. Animals are also vulnerable to viruses so we must also keep our pets protected. The rest of the day went too quickly, me and my family decided to cook and spend some time together, so we decided to watch a comedy film to remove any stress we had with laughter. Before I knew it, it was late, so I quickly finished my last assignment due Tuesday, did my night workout showered and went to bed. I fell asleep at 2:00 am but I felt very rested the next day. Tuesday, I took my online classes and waited for my mom to get home to head out to go shopping at Trader Joes. The line was very long but we decided to wait because we needed some fruit and their hash browns. Me and my sister waited in the car and watched as the line get growing but it kept moving, as we were taking snaps in the car, we saw that a woman got out her car and since she knew someone in line, she skipped the line and got on the line with her friend who was very close to the entrance. I felt very frustrated because she did not respect the line or the people who had been waiting for a long time, but my sister said that if the people in line did not care why should I.

Many people in present day are living in countries that do not have many medical advances or have resources to help with the treatment of the pandemic. Others are scared to go to a hospital when they are experiencing symptoms because they do not have money or their insurance does not cover their hospital visit, so this leads to many people not looking for treatment or getting tested for the virus to know if they could transmitted to other people. Many people are dying because they have looked for help to late or not getting help at all. As I spoke to my dad in Ecuador, he told me that many people are afraid to go to the hospital because they are

afraid of getting the virus on their hospital visit. Many doctors and nurses have died in Ecuador because they do not have enough resources to control this pandemic. It is a third world country that its very small and poor. My mom's brother is having a great lost in his business, he has been looking for small jobs he could do to earn some money to support his family. I think during this hard time is when we must show our support to the ones that need the most. My mom has sent her brother some money to help with groceries and I have sent my grandparents and aunt \$ 100 each for them to buy groceries that they need. It is a beautiful thing to support your family when they need you the most.

Me and my sister the rest of the week we have continued with our creativity days and have tried creating masks and close for our dog. We tried creating masks but that was a failure because we did not have materials to make them, but to our surprise our cousin's wife has taken her talent to make masks to donate and give to our family. So, we received our masks two days ago. Sunday my cousins invited us to a barbecue where we eat hot dogs, we made some meat with potatoes and corn because there was no more chicken at BJs. The yard was covered in leaves and grass was growing in between the bricks on the floor so we decided as a family to clean the backyard and prepare the food together. I feel as if all the weight I have lost during my workouts these last couple of weeks were all gained back after eating everything. But it does not matter because we were able to spend family time after not being able to interact with them for a long time.

When things just appear to be getting better, they start to get worse. All over social media a could see two-inch Asian hornets making headlines on articles and posts. They were introduced to the media as deadly, venomous and dangerous. They will destroy many things in the food chain and began to ruin our food, fruit and Vegetables. The more I think about it the more I am

convinced that we are being punished for it, taking life seriously and being ungrateful for what we have. People were always ungrateful about their jobs, family and resources because they had them all the time and it has become something that we find unnecessary annoying but now that we do not have it, we are desperate to get it back. People have become unemployed and are not able to receive unemployment, so they are suffering financially and now they want their jobs back, many others have lost many members of their family who they once wished will go away, others have also lost resources they had, they have limited amount of food and cleaning supplies that they can buy. Things we once complained about its now something we want back desperately. I have lost count of how many weeks I have been living an abnormal life, missing being able to see the family I once complained about seeing every weekend and missing taking transportation to school. I have lost important aspects of my life that I now realize I should be more grateful about.

There is a disease that could be related to the COVID-19 called Kawasaki Disease that is mainly targeting kids 5 years and younger that has turned society once again upside down. This has caused a lot of worry for me because I have little cousins who could now be victims of this disease. I have one little cousin who is younger than 5 years-old and who has had a heart problem since birth, so this week has been a very emotional week thinking about how much more harm needs to be done to society for things to get better and why things like this could be happening to innocent little kids who should not have to be going through this. Life seems to be so unfair these days. I have been calling my cousins after telling them to take care of their kids because no one is safe. This has made me reconsidered my decision of steering away from pursuing a career in medicine. Doctors, nurses and all first responders have become the most important people in society, people that we need, and hope will always remain there to give us

hope for life. Society needs to stop admiring the wrong people in the world, it is not the influencers and rich people who are saving our lives and putting their own lives at risk it is the doctors and nurses who are taking 12 hour shifts in the intense care unit to give it their all to save their patients life. They are heroes that do not need to wear capes to save others.

Realizing that we will have to spend many more weeks isolated from my loved ones has giving me anxiety. As I am writing this, I am in tears this has begun to have a major effect on me, and I am hoping this is over soon. There is so many things that I have done and said that I regret now, and I can't take it back and that's the worst part. I must watch my grandmother through a screen every night asking her about her health and her emotional state without being able to give her a hug and tell her that everything will be fine. My family in Ecuador are not able to go out of their homes after 2 o' clock in the afternoon and can take out their cars on only one specific day of the week. I want to buy a ticket and go to my family in Ecuador and help them, but I know this at this point is impossible. I want to hug them and kiss them and assure them that this is something that will pass, and we can get through this together. I am a person that often cries in silence and tries to act strong for everyone else but times like this you need someone to talk to and listen to all your fears. This person has become my sister who I now try to enjoy every moment with, and she just holds me and consults me. Even though she is a year and three months younger than me she has become my rock in this time. For the last three days of this week I have only got out of bed to shower and eat, I haven't been able to do anything besides this and my assignments for finals. I have lost my appetite and want to sleep all the time; I am mentally and physically exhausted and afraid that I will not be able to live a normal life again.

My mom and the rest of the women in my families will not have the Mother's Day they deserve. Like every other year I will wake up my mom with a song and tell her how much I love

her and appreciate her for being my mom and dad since I was four and the amazing and strong woman that she is but except this year I will have to include that she is amazing for going to work every day and going food shopping for us, putting her life at risk during this time. This year I won't be able to take her out to eat her favorite meals and celebrate her for being the best mother in the world. As I told her all of this, this morning she told me that if we are together, she doesn't care if we celebrate it or not. My cousins and my sister and I decided to make a small barbecue to celebrate the amazing mothers we have and get them some cake, even though it was a small celebration this year I am sure we will be able to have a big celebration next year.

As weeks pass by things seem to be getting better and more people are trying to live a normal life but there is no such thing as going back to normal after this. This pandemic has shown me that America, even though it is a first world country, was not prepared for such a thing as a pandemic. Americans did not have the ability to respond quickly to such a deadly virus. Our culture has prevented us from believing that such a virus is real, it is making us be close minded about the actions that are being taken by our governors and mayors. During this time, we have seen issues with our health care system, and people be brought to light. Many people have decided to go against the dangers of obtaining the virus and have gone out to protest having to stay in quarantine because they feel that they are being deprived of their freedom, others believe that everything that is happening is something being controlled by the government, and they are using this to gain control over Americans.