

In the Spring of 2020, I was commuting to work when I realized how quiet it was on the road. My wife and I both held essential jobs – my wife as a nurse manager and myself working for the airport police. Normally, in Washington DC, especially in the Springtime, you would see lots of traffic on the roads, children walking to school, and even planes flying in and out of the busy airports. In the Spring of 2020, what I was struck by the sound of silence. At the time, most people were forced to stay home and the only traffic on the road belonged to first responders going to and from the hospital to pick up someone in medical distress, presumably from COVID-19.

As I parked at the airport, there was none of the normal sounds of airplanes landing or taking off, enthusiastic tourists departing or arriving at Washington D.C. for some sightseeing or even the normal delivery trucks arriving at the airport with supplies for the restaurants and local shops. As I entered the airport, everything was closed. Flights had been canceled and almost all stores were closed. This silence was a reminder of the earlier reality that was now the new normal of travel. I can remember that the only sounds I heard during this time were of police and first responder vehicles. As I walked through the airport to my office, the sound of automated announcements was being played indicating followed by the somber news updates on televisions throughout the terminal that updated the extent of the pandemic.

Additionally, I when I went home, I bypassed my daughter's school, which normally would be bustling with activity. Instead, it was quiet and closed. These were the early days of COVID, and the Governor had issued a stay at home order for all Virginians that lasted approximately six to eight weeks. Over the course of this time, the sounds of COVID became ambulances going back and forth but in the interim it was the silence that was most deafening.