

Emersen

Age 18

Grade 12

Somers High School

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What were your thoughts when the first COVID-19 cases were being diagnosed in China?

I feel as though the COVID-19 spread in China was at the back of my mind. I wasn't anticipating it to hit the US at the magnitude at which it did. I trusted in this country to manage to curb this outbreak before it even began. Clearly, I was mistaken.

How have things changed for you and/or your family since the outbreak?

My family consists of a bunch of homebodies, and we've had the privilege of being able to work from home; however, the small business pension checks were unavailable to us as the government ran out of funding before the program even started. I am grateful to have access to food, water, and electronics during this time. I just hope that everyone who relied on these checks and were unable to receive them manage to get through this. I lost an uncle to the virus in these past few weeks, and that was difficult. He was an accomplished engineer and photographer, who worked with the likes of NASA. We hold him highly in our memories and remember him fondly.

For you, what is the worst thing about this?

The deaths. After losing my uncle, I was harshly reminded of how volatile and brutal this virus can be. Our fundamentally flawed healthcare system denied him a test and treatment for weeks, and my similarly infected aunt had to drive to several emergency rooms in the area to attempt to get him treatment as he came closer to dying. Testing and treatment should be more available, efficient, and affordable than it is in this country. The rich can get preemptively diagnoses and treated, whilst the other 99% are left to their own devices. Change must be made.

In your experience so far, what, if anything, has been positive about this?

I've been able to spend time with my immediate family during these times, especially as I prepare to attend an out-of-state college next year.

Tell us about a moment or experience during this time that you will never forget.

Eagerly anticipating the mail, as it became my sole entertainment. Mail workers have done so much for us, and I never anticipated packages to mean so much to me.

Pretend it is the year 2050 and another pandemic is looming--what would you tell someone who has just asked what it was like to live through the 2020 pandemic?

Social distancing is key! Many people my age are failing to do this, only prolonging this pandemic. People need to check their privilege and STAY HOME.

(continued...)



March 15, 2020. Attempted to go grocery shopping, but we faced several empty shelves (especially with non-perishables). This was before the virus even made much headway. My school was only temporarily closed, my mother still was required to go to work, and I was allowed to leave the house without a mask on. Though we were fortunate enough to leave with a full cart, it was still shocking to encounter so many empty shelves.

