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## COVID-19 Pandemic

This past year has been full of crazy, unexpected events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When the first case of corona came to the US, I wasn't aware of how large of an impact it would have on our country. Not knowing much about the virus, I never thought it would come anywhere close to myself or the people I know but I was wrong. When corona first came to the United States, many of us didn't really think anything of it, until it was in our own state. During the last couple of weeks of high school that were in person, it was rare to hear a conversation that wasn't about corona. The pandemic was the main topic of many conversations causing anxiety and worry amongst so many. Not much information was given to any of us students and at the time no one really knew anything about the virus or how to contain it. The more the cases rose, the more people freaked out. Massachusetts was one of the first "hot spot" states causing schools to shut down and almost all jobs switching to online.

With the virus spreading more, my school decided to shut down. One of my teachers came in contact with a family member who tested positive for corona, and my whole school went into panic mode. Kids were calling their parents to get dismissed because the staff weren't giving us updates on the incident with the teacher. The next day school was cancelled and everyone believed that we would be back the next week. The next week came around and my school

pushed it back to 2 weeks. Week after week our time off school continued to grow and soon enough we were told that we weren't going back to school. Reality hit everyone when we found out we couldn't go back to school because of how serious COVID was getting in our state. No prom, no normal graduation, no senior trip, no awards night, and so many other missed events. My school was not prepared to switch to online classes, so we had a break from school for almost a month before they figured out the situation with classes and teaching online. I still ended up having club volleyball practice after the fact until one night our coach told us it would be our last practice for a while and maybe even for the rest of the season. My teammates and I couldn't believe the news and kept questioning our coaches about our season, but it was unknown what the future would hold. At this point no one knew how to deal with the situation at hand. Stores, restaurants, business, etc all shut down and at this point nothing felt real. Strict quarantine rules and curfews were set in place for almost all residents in MA and we were forced to wear a mask everywhere we went. Being a hot spot state, masks were required everywhere unlike the southern states who had the option to wear one. Although rules were being followed, the number of positive tests rose and the death rate continued to increase. The virus was untamable and everyone believed it would get worse before it got better.

The governor of Boston kept pushing back quarantine week after week with no set date as to when we were going to get back to normal. We lived day by day without any answers and constantly stayed on our toes waiting for permission to leave quarantine. After a few months of strict quarantine, the rules started to slowly lift. Stores started to slowly open with a certain amount of customers shopping at once, and long lines waited outside for hours on end. Restaurants opened to take out and you had to order through online services only.

Just as we were making a positive turn by slowly coming out of quarantine and isolation, another curve ball was thrown throughout the world. We were hit with the unwarranted death of Breonna Taylor in her own home. This African American woman was sleeping in her home when plain clothed police invaded her apartment without a warning believing there was a suspect, but the suspect had already been apprehended and it wasn't the correct building. This ignited the start up of the Black Lives Matters Movement with protests and petitions throughout social media and news outlets across the country. Not long after this incident another instance of police brutality took place. An African American man, George Floyd, was strangled to death in police custody which was caught on video and spread worldwide. This sparked many peaceful protests and cities across the country, some which resulted in violence on both sides of the protesters and authorities. It got to a point where, even in peaceful protests, authorities would take extreme measures against peaceful protesters by tear gassing crowds and shooting rubber bullets. Not only did this cause a bigger rift between authorities and people of color, but it sparked the BLM movement which became world wide. The articles and visuals shared on social media were eye opening to me. Although I am a person of color in a predominantly white town, my brothers and I never experienced anything like what we were seeing on the news. Growing up my mom would always remind my brothers to stay cautious, "act appropriately" and stay safe when going out especially at night time. My brothers, who are tall black males, like listening to loud music while driving and occasionally wear durags to protect their hair, which is a part of black culture. To police and society this is a stereotypical representation of a black man. Little do they know, they are smart respectful men who have done so much for their community and school. Being the younger sister of my three brothers, I was worried for their safety after seeing

so many instances where black males were killed for the slightest issue. My mom, brothers and I attended a few protests to stand up for minorities who are being oppressed in the criminal justice system. This was a big part of my quarantine and taught me so much about the world we live in today.

In all 2020 has been a crazy year with corona and the Black Lives Matter Movement. All the ups and downs this year has taught me a lot about myself and the insane world that we live in today. I never thought I would experience living through a pandemic, I would've never thought I'd experience half of what I've been through this year.