

## COVID-19 Reflection

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was attending boarding school in Florida, and we had just finished basketball season. I live in Bermuda, so I had to take two flights to get home for spring break. Everything was pretty normal on my way home, as travel had not been significantly impacted by the virus yet. When I got home, I didn't have to quarantine or take an arrival test, as I arrived before they introduced those strict measures. I was very lucky because a week later, everyone entering the country was made to quarantine for two weeks. At first, it was a lot of fun because I got to see all of my friends who came back home from their schools all over the world. However, this changed pretty quickly in late March when the first case arrived on the island, and the government quickly put us into lockdown.

Our lockdown was very strict; people were only able to leave the house on certain days to get groceries, with very few exceptions. All schools, public parks, tourist sites, restaurants, and non-essential businesses were closed for the duration of the lockdown. My family was very lucky because my mom owns an "essential business", meaning we were allowed to leave the house any day we wanted to get groceries and go for drives. That being said, the lockdown was difficult; I'm accustomed to being around people all the time, and it was very strange to be confined to my house for an extended period of time. At first, I found it kind of relaxing and peaceful, and I enjoyed having some personal space, as it's rare when you go to boarding school. I found it nice to spend time with my brother and my parents being that I hadn't seen them for months before the lockdown started. However, as we got further into our lockdown, it became quite irritating to be in the house with the same people for so long. I'd say that personally, the

worst part of our lockdown was the inability for me to go to the gym; I found this very frustrating because working out is my way of clearing my mind, and after a while I started to feel trapped.

The lockdown lasted from late March until May 1<sup>st</sup>, and when we got out at first things were very different. Progressing to phase 1 of reopening was very freeing because I was able to go outside again and see my friends. The first day out of lockdown, my friends and I went to the beach for the first time in weeks and spent the whole day together. Although most businesses, restaurants, and shops remained closed, being able to see my friends again was great for my mental health as I immediately felt less isolated. Bermuda progressed through the phases of reopening very quickly, and by mid-June, we were in phase 4 and COVID free. The airport opened in early July and life felt pretty normal at home; we didn't have to wear masks anymore (except for in the airport) and people were allowed to gather freely without any restrictions or curfew. After we were completely reopened, the summer festivities went on as usual, and the summer felt very normal. I was able to work and have a normal summer from July until I left for school in late August, and everyone on the island was grateful that the government was able to contain the virus so quickly.

Before I left for school, I was required to take a pre-departure test so that I could travel. When I got to the airport on the day of my flight, I was required to wear a mask for the first time in months for the entire time in the airport and the duration of the flight, which I found to be extremely annoying. I flew to New York City and stayed in Manhattan for a few days before driving to Springfield. Immediately after getting off of the plane, it was like I had entered a

different world. Everyone was wearing masks and gloves, and freaking out about the virus. It was such an extreme contrast from what I had experienced at home. After arriving to New York City, I could immediately see how different the place was. The streets and stores that were once crowded with people were almost empty; I couldn't believe how different it actually was. I remember walking down fifth avenue and not having to avoid walking into people or navigate a crowd, and it was such a weird feeling.

When I arrived at Springfield College, I was shocked by how strict the measures here were. I hadn't been forced to wear a mask since June, and all of a sudden, I had to wear one everywhere I went. I found it so strange how panicked everyone was about the virus, since I have never known anyone who had the virus, or who had any severe complications as a result of it. I found it particularly strange how we had to wear masks while working out, as I had never done that before. It is fair to say that I was shocked with the extreme contrast between life at home and life at Springfield College after arriving here.

In conclusion, Bermuda was not significantly affected by COVID-19, especially in comparison to America. Therefore, transitioning from somewhere that wasn't significantly impacted by the virus to Springfield College was very strange. The strict rules and regulations we have to abide by are very different from how my friends and family at home are living. Regardless, I knew before coming that the regulations here would be stricter than I was accustomed to at home. Overall, this year was not particularly easy for anyone; everyone was impacted in some way, and I'm grateful that where I come from didn't experience the worst of the virus.