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Current Student's Deep Reflections on Life During and After the Pandemic

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Current Carleton Student

May 9th, 2020

“Well I think, mostly, only the last week I’ve kind of been feeling really sad about not being back at school. Just the little things like walking to Burton with people and walking to the arb and the rec and hanging out with people--just the little stuff--like leaving class. Here, I leave class and hang up my Zoom call and then I walk to the kitchen, whereas there [at school], I would walk out of Leighton and then go see people in Sayles or something. And so it’s just those little things that formulate my social life that I’ve been missing a lot, in addition to parties and the social events and captains’ practices. But, I have enjoyed our Zoom [calls]. I’ve appreciated everybody’s efforts to stay socially connected via Zoom and e-mail and social media, but [missing] the in person things are really sad. Yesterday, we walked the 2.23 for Ahmaud [Arbery] and it was fun to connect with a couple of my friends from my high school and their moms. Obviously, we were walking six feet apart with masks on and trying to dodge people in a park. But, it was still like ‘oh my gosh I forgot what it’s like to interact with people who I’m not in a house with.’ And it was nice because we didn’t really talk about the virus at all, I feel like most of our conversations are dominated by life [surrounding] the virus which makes sense, obviously, but...there’s nothing else going on. We can’t talk about sports games or like what people are doing for the summer because that’s all sort of eliminated by what’s going on with the virus...The nature of our gathering was devastating, but it was nice to have that connection.”

“I’m really lucky to have four people in my family who are all doing pretty well. We are really close, so I don’t feel lonely...there are people around me doing their thing and I feel supported and able to be myself. Obviously, there’s challenges with having five people experiencing the virus on their own. Like my sister is graduating from high school, not really, and her prom was supposed to be today, but we are having it in our backyard with two of her friends. You know,...her emotional experience is completely different from mine, same with my brother’s, same with my parents’. And so that’s an interesting dynamic just feeling like you want to tiptoe around people because you...want to validate and make room for them to feel their emotions, but at the same time kind of be impacted by that...My dad is on the front lines as an infectious disease doctor, so that’s been definitely interesting. I think he comes home and wants to get a break from it; I think it’s very stressful. His job is already stressful, I think the addition of this...enhances [magnifies] everything about his job, I guess: the patient interaction, the kind of numbness to the illness and death, and the really sad things about this virus. But, at the same time, a couple of our friends have sent donuts to his office or ordered food for his office. We always do the howl at 8pm. We are on our evening walks and everybody opens their doors and is banging pots and pans and is screaming. And so that sense of solidarity is cool...My aunt is also a nurse, she is just really anxious for what’s going to happen if they resume elective surgeries and someone needs to go to the ICU, but the ICU is already full of COVID patients. So the different opinions, different desires within the medical community and within everybody’s perceptions of

what should be happening, what shouldn't be happening: reopening things, not reopening things, wearing masks, not wearing masks."

"I tend to look really optimistically. I'm really excited we can see our whole mountain range on our runs because usually we are not able to because of pollution...I like the solidarity, like the howl, and people reaching out and connecting with each other, but it's really sad to see the protests or see people kind of fighting against this. I've had a hard time grappling with my perspective on humanity in the US, given our leadership...I think it's really complicated and it's hard to feel like I'm able to make a change when I'm just in my house. I guess I'm just looking forward to what's going to happen after this. I know it's a problematic term to discuss a 'new normal,' or going back to normal because, obviously, nothing is going to be normal after this."

"I did a photography presentation about a photographer who photographed the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl...and then there was a book about her written in 2008 and the 2008 crisis. So, it was neat to reflect on how we've hit these economic, political, and social bumps, significant ones, that have changed everybody's lives in the US...I don't really have a conclusion like 'I'm looking forward to this or I'm really scared about this'. It just kind of comes and goes, and there's bad days and days where I'm like 'oh my gosh this is a really neat experience for everybody to change their perspective and really reflect on their lives and their own opinions, own beliefs. And then there's days where I'm like 'this is tragic, people are dying,' I feel so disconnected...I really want to go back to school, but...I don't know how it's gonna be when we all want to go back to a party and we are in a room with fifty people. I just don't know what it's going to be like. Or, people are going to go back to a gym or like swim season--I don't know. And I'm more comfortable in that uncertainty, I guess, but it's a privilege to be more comfortable in that uncertainty because everything is fine at my house. It's impossible for me to imagine what it's like for people who don't have that privilege."