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Final Reflections

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1. How has the pandemic impacted you?
 - a. relationships?
 - b. future plans?
 - c. lifestyle, habits, routines, etc? What have you had to adapt to and what has changed?
 - d. Belonging?
2. What is something positive that has come out of this whole experience?
 - i. What is the most important lesson or meaningful experience you have gained from this project? Positive and Negative?

By itself, this pandemic and period of social isolation has been tough as it has challenged me to live in the present, not drowning in “what would have been” or “what could have happened.” On top of this, I have been struggling with the ending of a serious relationship, having to navigate these uncertain times without the person I have relied on for so long. For that reason, I feel like this term and subsequent transition home has been even more abrupt for me, as I quickly left school and a relationship behind all within a couple of days. I have been forced to process all this “ending” during quarantine and acknowledge how it has destroyed the spring term that I expected in terms of academics, social life, and relationships.

Consequently, I have had to adjust my lifestyle and not isolate myself despite all the sadness we all are struggling with. I would say I am a very social and outgoing person, and that’s easy to maintain on campus since you are literally living with all of your friends. There is built in time for community building, whether that be chatting before class, walking to the Libe with a friend, team dinners, doing homework with friends, having a late night snack in Sayles with friends, and so much more. I could keep that list running forever, and I know that shows how much I really love Carleton. But, I miss having eighty friends on campus that I know I can talk to pretty much at any time of the day. I miss physically seeing them, waving, smiling, hugging. We have all adjusted, talking over Zoom, setting up fun online parties, using Snapchat groups, and email chains, but it isn’t the same. I am only talking to a fraction of the friends I know I have at Carleton, but I recognize that it is impossible to try and connect with eighty people when we are all in isolation. I am looking forward to giving all those friends huge hugs when we get back on campus because my life just isn’t the same without them.

I still feel like I belong to specific groups and communities at Carleton, but I find it difficult to foster those relationships if I don’t feel comfortable talking online with every single person alone. As a result, I have been connecting most frequently with my closest group, the swim team, as we have built in social times that make it easier to stay connected. Through weekly captains’ practices, homework calls, women’s team night gatherings, calls with coaches,

and many more outlets, we as a team have stayed super close--we are family, all sixty of us! Also, I am so grateful that I got to interview a large handful of my teammates for the archive, giving us time to deepen our relationships one-on-one and have deep conversations. These interviews revealed to me that I am not alone in my feelings and that other people share my struggles.

I have learned that this quarantine is all about intentionality for me. I intentionally reach out to a non swim friend once a week and do homework with them. I intentionally continue exercising and preparing for next swim season. I intentionally meet with my therapist every week to stay healthy and process everything with her. I intentionally spend more time with family when I'm feeling lonely or anxious. I intentionally make time to see my friends from home despite all the school work I have. I intentionally use positive self-talk to boost my spirits. I intentionally have new goals for the summer including returning and creating handwritten letters and artwork that friends have sent me. I intentionally have found ways to grow from this and have not let this break up define me. Overall, I have learned, despite all this chaos and change, not to give in or sink amidst a challenge, but rather prove to myself that I am strong.

3. How has your college experience impacted your view of the pandemic?

The stark contrast between being at college, living my best life, and current times has really impacted how I view this pandemic. This pandemic, although horrific and terrible, especially combined with the riots and protests condemning the murder of George Floyd, has made me appreciate Carleton even more as I am separated from it. I appreciate the Carleton community as it is supportive, challenging (academic), engaged, and unique. I am very grateful and blessed that I am able to see this pandemic in a somewhat positive light as I acknowledge that I live in a safe home, do not need to expose myself to the virus in order to work for my family, do not need to care for any sick family members, and so much more. I realize that it is a privilege to be relatively safe from the virus as it is disproportionately affecting communities of color, Native communities, communities that do not have access to proper medical facilities, lower income communities, etc due to the structural inequalities and systems of injustice in our society that still remain. Especially after the murder of George Floyd, I am doing my best to address my blessings in the light of all the inequity in this country where supposedly all citizens are "equal," but in reality the remanants of discriminatory and inhumane systems still exist. We need to change.

4. What is something you think should be preserved in public memory about this time?

I have seen a specific commercial with a one-hundred year old woman who was born during the outbreak of the Spanish influenza in 1918. She sends a message of hope to expecting mothers, explaining how she lived through the quarantine of her childhood alongside her mother, so the

new mothers and newborn babies will too. I think this commercial needs to be preserved in public memory as it exudes hope and connects experiences across generations.