

Dear future generations, I am writing to you because the experience I have had this past year has been extraordinary. From an insurrection, to the death of thousands, to ongoing climate catastrophes, one thing everyone can agree on is that this past year has been terrible. While this fire has always been burning, everything really went south in March of 2020. I remember vividly the week leading up to lockdown, I believe it was the third week in March, and each day I would come home from school to more terrible news. My family was rather pessimistic about the pandemic, and by Monday we were sure that schools were going to close. I had expressed this to my classmates, however they told me that I was crazy and that for a school to close from this was impossible.

However, when I came home on Wednesday, my parents had some bad news for me. I wasn't going back to school the next day. Schools weren't safe and they were pulling me and my 16 year old brother with no notice. I immediately contacted some friends and arranged for them to bring my supplies, as I had left critical notebooks and a Kindle in my locker. After emailing my teachers and requesting asynchronous work to complete, it finally settled in. My adrenaline rush had subsided and the terror swept in. This was it, I might not see my friends for months, I might have already contracted the virus, everything was changing, and not for the better.

Two days later my school sent in the official verdict that everyone was virtual for at least two weeks. That weekend I had my last friend over for many months. He brought my supplies and I realized that this was the last time I could do this for who knows how long. After those two weeks came two more weeks, then just one more month, then after summer break, then whenever the city lets us. Eventually we were open for hybrid learning, but after trying two weeks of it I was disappointed and went back to virtual.

It is now January 27th of 2021, there is now a vaccine that is just starting distribution, however it is still not approved for those under age 16 and I have no clue when I will get it. The presidency just got handed over and things seem to be starting to improve, but I do not have much hope for the future. I hope I am proven wrong and the future is bright, but I do not wish to return to normal. I say this because the question on everyone's tongue right now is when we can go back to normal, when we can reopen schools, when we can reinstate travel. The problem is that putting everything back where it was causes us to return to a normal that is awful for most people. Normal is where African Americans are more than 6 times as likely to be incarcerated, normal is where more than 40% of homeless youth are queer, normal is where 90% of adult rape victims are female, and normal is where we do not have mandatory equal rights for all. So I am not hopeful for the future, and I am not looking forward to normal again.