

My name is Daphne Franklin. I'm 16 years old, a sophomore in high school, homeschooled, and I live in Smithfield, Virginia. Before the pandemic hit, my spring was extremely busy. I had added a chemistry lab to my classes, was going on a spring trip with one of my orchestra groups, and the softball season was going full swing. Instead, COVID-19 was introduced to America, and everything stopped.

My family had started social isolation before the governor ordered it, and so a little bit before the second week of March, I was staying home 24/7. Some of my in-person classes were moved online, and all of them were digitized in some way. I'm taking French lessons over the phone, and I now watch YouTube videos that my creative writing teacher uploads. As for my music studies, I've halted with my piano and organ lessons, but continued with my violin lessons through video calls. My orchestra class is creating a stay-at-home performance. Every one of us are recording ourselves playing the piece in the safety of our own home, then submitting it so it can be mixed—so we can all play together in spirit.

I've discovered that when given free time, I'm much more creative. I've picked up several sewing projects that I started last year, and I've been making collages out of old cut up magazines. There's also time to just sit down at our piano and noodle around, or pull out new pieces and play them on the violin again. It's an interesting blend of being bored out of my mind, and being swamped with creative inspiration. I don't mind it.

It's harder for me to find motivation, though. I still procrastinate on school projects, although I haven't gotten as close to the deadline like I did before quarantine. One thing I will say: this lockdown has given me a much better appreciation of my classes. Online school has been giving me a chance to hear the voices of people that aren't my family, and it's really helped me get through this. Once school stops, it's going to be hard to fill the gap.

Because I've had so much free time, I've been on social media, and one of my favorite actors made an incredible point on Twitter. George Takei, who I know as Sulu on Star Trek, tweeted "I didn't spend my childhood in barbed wire enclosed internment camps so I could listen to grown adults today cry oppression because they have to wear a mask at Costco." He makes a reference to history that I would not have connected, otherwise. The Japanese-Americans were willing to give up their freedom for the good of the country, even if it was wrong. So why can't we do that today? People are constantly complaining about their lack of freedom due to COVID-19. They view it as a restriction of their right, but when we look at it, it's irrational to think that way. If we were threatened by submarines, or bombings, would we be so hesitant to use blackout curtains? No, we wouldn't, because it might mean the difference between living and dying.

The one thing that gives me hope is Star Trek—you know, that old tv show from the 60s, and its multiple iterations that have spanned from 1966 to 2020? Yes, that old show. Star Trek has so many different episodes, each with a different feel. Some of them even deal with pandemics and viral infections. Just when it seems that the entire crew is going to die from this sickness, a

cure is found, and there are minimal casualties. This gives me a lot of hope, because this portrayal of the future tells me that yes, there will be sickness, but the sickness will pass, and the future will be brighter. The show tells the story of humans struggling through periods of time like this, just like they have for centuries, and that we will survive it.

It also gives me hope to look at how bright humans can be. Scientists like Joseph Lister, who discovered how to stop gangrene, have saved countless lives with their studies, and it can be done again, in 2020. Humans never cease to amaze me in that respect. Scientists and researchers are some of the most inspiring people on this planet, with the attention to detail and the concentration it takes to focus on their field of study.

All in all, 2020 will be simultaneously the worst and the best year, because while I'll be stuck at home for the most part, I'll also be bored enough to learn new skills, finish old projects, and, of course, watch more Star Trek.