

An informal letter to the Coronavirus:

Dear Coronavirus,

I hate to say that it is not very good to meet you. You have come into our lives in a time where devastations are already aplenty. 2020 was supposed to be a year of growth and life-changing events in the lives of many people around the world, but we have all been forced to make arrangements because you decided to give us a visit. I know you were founded in December of 2019, but I never really started to feel your repercussions until cases of your virus started to appear in the United States around mid-January. The next thing I knew, people started taking action. There was just a sense of hyperawareness to everything and everyone around me. I try to continue life as I knew it, waking up early getting ready for school heading out to my biology class then spending the rest of the day on my college campus studying for my upcoming exams. I knew that things were not gonna stay the same for long, and I knew that you were not going to let them either. My friends and I watched as other schools around the area began to close down, sending their students home, and issuing stay at home orders. Yeah we continue to go to school. My siblings continue to go to school and my parents continue to go to work, but it was as if we were walking on eggshells not knowing what was going to happen next. I remember going to school on Thursday and following my regular routine of attending lecture then staying afterwards to study with my friends, and that is when we got an email from the president of our university stating that school was going to be closed for a week and that all of our classes were going to be moved to online. I did not know how to feel. The work schedule that I had set up in the routine that I had been following was all going to change because you decided to make an appearance in the city of Sacramento. It was too close to home to not take any action, so my university decided to give us all a week to figure out how to deal with having all of our classes online as well as give time for students to return home if they had been living on campus. Life was just weird. I went to school on Friday because I had my last lab to attend before campus had officially closed for the semester, and I remember campus resembling a ghost town. Parking was way too easy to find, and there was almost no one on campus. I saw students scrambling to collect their belongings from the dorms so that they could drive home just to be with their families during the stay at home order.

As soon as the governor of California issued the stay at home order things around me began to change. I feel like every single company has emailed me about you, telling me what actions they are taking to prevent us from contracting you, and telling me whether they were closed or moved online or had modified store hours to prevent overcrowding. Almost every post on my social media accounts how to become a post about how to protect others and ourselves from contracting you. Every single news channel was talking about you. The roads had begun to clear up, and it was very obvious that people were spending more time at home because of the issued stay at home order and the idea of self-isolation and quarantining to prevent the spread of your virus. My interactions with strangers have always been a little odd, but levels of fear and paranoia have definitely skyrocketed in the past few months. People have become paranoid all the time; trying to ensure that they would not touch a surface and then accidentally touch their

face or make sure not to be around people who are coughing and sneezing because they might just be a carrier of your virus. You have made us all skeptical and judgemental of one another and it is not very comforting. Simply going out to the store now, which is all we are allowed to do, feels like we are going out for battle. We are the soldiers and everyone is on opposing sides. The store is our battlefield, and we are all just trying to make sure that we do not contract your virus from an unsuspecting carrier. You seem to have slowly turned us against one another. People have been fighting over toilet paper, toiletries, hand sanitizer, and common household essentials. I feel myself becoming weary as my dad returns from his shift working in the intensive care unit, because I am scared that he might have a little bit of your virus back home with him. I guess I'm writing to you to say that you have been a lot more powerful than anyone could ever imagine. You have taken the lives of many, and forced us all to stay indoors only because we are scared of getting you. You have changed our lives for an eternity. You have taught us to be thankful for our health, our family, a place to stay, and the ability to pay the bills when times get hard. Coronavirus, COVID-19, or whatever people are calling you now, we know what you were capable of and we want to ask you to please disappear as soon as possible and let us return to our lives as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Manar Karzoun

(A citizen of the world living in 2020)