

I didn't know that March 12, 2020 would be the last day of school for my senior year at Brooklyn Technical High School. The COVID-19 pandemic is truly an important turning point in history. The virus spread very quickly and took many lives. It reminded me of the Black Death, which I read about in textbooks. I couldn't imagine that we were going to experience a similar pandemic in the year 2020 that our ancestors experienced in the Middle Ages. Back in February, I thought that Coronavirus wouldn't spread farther than Asia and soon it would be cured.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 reached New York City and "The City That Never Sleeps" experienced emptiness. Restrictions were placed on tourism. My life has switched to being virtual. It changed my lifestyle. I wondered what it would be like to visit New York City without tourists. When I did, it felt very weird and almost like an apocalypse. It made me very sad. Now, I miss the hecticness of New York City. It has left many people like myself wondering, when will life get back to normal? Being at home all the time made me miss face-to-face interactions from school. I really missed my classmates and my teachers.

I attended online school because of COVID-19. The only way I could reach out to my classmates was through my computer and phone. Wearing masks and gloves became our reality. We even faced shortages in stores. During this quarantine I've found myself doing things I never imagined that I would do. I began going on daily walks with my siblings and bonding more with them. Coronavirus made me realize the importance of unity and not taking everything for granted. At times, I would get depressed because I would follow the same routine. I would just wake up and do school work. It would be very scary to go outside because I wouldn't know who had COVID-19. Overtime, by following the social distancing rules and wearing a mask, I went outside with my family and I felt so much better. Taking walks helped me keep my sanity.

I realized how fortunate I am to have parents that provide a roof over my head and food on the table. I began to appreciate nature and walk more outside. Quarantine has made me cherish these things. I have been spending my free time hanging out with my family. Exercising with my sister at home, riding my bike more often and watching movies on Netflix. In April, we saw shortages of medical supplies and dead bodies decomposing in trucks because morgues maxed on capacity. It was very horrifying because you wouldn't know if it would happen to you or someone you know.

It's very despairing that people lost their loved ones to COVID-19. Following the rules established by the government is the least we can do. Health care professionals are putting their whole lives at risk by working on the front lines. Staying at home and hoping for the best will help many of us go through quarantine. When the death rates began to increase in New York City, I began to become fearful of catching COVID-19. News reports and videos about deaths created a fear in my head, especially because many of my relatives work in the medical field. Even my father got sick with COVID-19. It was very emotional to see someone so close to you being very sick. It took him a whole month to recover. My whole family quarantined so we wouldn't spread the virus. I still remember seeing empty medication aisles in CVS.

In 2020, we experienced the death of George Floyd, which caused civil unrest and many protests. I feel like protests made many Americans realize the injustice in our country. People unified and spoke out against the oppression that POC faced. It's been 56 years since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Black people are still oppressed and segregated in the United States. I think 2020 changed the mindsets of many people and changed our ideology.

I never got the chance to go to prom or graduate with my classmates in person. It was a little bit sad because I wasn't going to sign yearbooks with my friends or experience graduation. I realized that I was going to attend Brooklyn College through online classes. I'm proud that New York overcame the horrors we experienced during the height of the pandemic. The future is uncertain, but we need to be strong and continue to fight.