

The Perspective of a Department Store Employee

When everything happened, I do not think anyone would have predicted the toll that it would have taken on us. Looking back at it now, I remember the day we all were called to the backroom. It was the first time I have ever seen a large gathering of all my coworkers. The leads stood together, united, as we listen to them inform us of all the possible possibilities that could happen in the following weeks. At the time, it felt that everything was going to be okay, and for a while it was. Precautions were taken, cleaning touch surfaces became second nature, face masks became one with the dress code. Everyone even got an additional \$2.00 pay raise, that felt like a pot of gold at the time. However, as time progressed and all of California was under lockdown, it became hard to keep up with the high demand for products. As a result, my work did what was expected and double the workload. Then, to guarantee customers' products early morning shifts became close to graveyard shifts. Lines began hours before store operation and when the doors finally opened, only chaos followed. The frenzy that took place the first weeks of quarantine, can make a busy black Friday feel like nothing. Then at some point, between the customers who never respected the social distancing rules to the one who shopped for non-essentials, I had realized the constant danger that I was surrounded in. I was conflicted between being grateful for still having a job and resenting it. The thought of potentially attracting the virus and giving it to my family made my perception of work to turn bitter. I can only hope that everyone will realize the amount of work essential workers must do and the dangers we put ourselves in. Then maybe they will stop contributing to the problem so that we can all be safe.