

The ubiquity of the coronavirus in Arizona is astounding. There is nothing like hearing that the region you live in is number one not for its merits but for its sickliness. These past few months have really made this pandemic more real for me, as the people I knew began to fall to the virus one by one. Most were okay after a few weeks but I am sad to write that more than a few have died. My job has had a few positive cases both among staff and customers coming into the restaurant sick. It's hard for me to blame the workers for coming in sick, the pandemic has crippled so many people financially that they literally cannot afford to lose two weeks of pay. It's either they lose everything, or risk killing someone by spreading the virus. As for the customers who come in sick I could not hold more disappointment. You do not need a meal at Village Inn to survive. So, as the family sitting at table 26 told me one of them tested positive, I had to tell my manager who then put us in a bleach protocol that entailed washing the entire establishment with a bleach mix so potent the smell didn't leave my hands for days. The dichotomy is incredible.

I have noticed that the positive cases I knew of were all among essential workers. My friends who worked at grocery stores, restaurants, retail stores, warehouses and gyms have all tested positive during the last few months. Even my own family, which consists of six people - four of which are essential workers, tested positive save me and my younger brother. Did that mean I was exposed to the virus? Yes, it did. Did it also mean I should have quarantined for two weeks? Yes, it did. Did I? No, because I needed the money. This is a very personal thing for me to admit on such an accessible archive, but it is a truth that I think is important to include. Actions speak much louder than words. Being labelled as essential feels nice and all until you realize you are being asked to risk your life and the life of your family for the service of others

who continue to disrespect you and fight against providing you with a liveable wage or economic relief. Essential, but not worthy of life.

I never tested positive among the tests I took that were so kindly provided to me from Arizona State University. I take some comfort in this, knowing that I was not spreading a virus that could severely damage someone. But my point still stands. Apparently quarantining oneself from a deadly virus is a privilege, one that essential workers do not have. Which, I suppose, explains the ubiquity of the virus amongst us.