

My name is Kylan Ritchie. I am a fourteen-year-old freshman from a small town near Clarksville, Tennessee. I am homeschooled due to the fact that I am a professional actress. COVID-19 did not have any effect on my school however, it has had a temporary effect on my job. I normally have a summer acting job but, due to COVID-19, I will be spending my summer at home. During my time in quarantine, which started on March 18th, I have learned various things about myself, my friends, and my family. Personally, I have learned that when I set my mind to something, in this circumstance, that was school, I can achieve a lot more than I believed. I learned that I am a procrastinator and that is something that I am attempting to fix. Also, I have learned that I do, in fact, have the mental stability to stay locked away in my house for long periods of time.

My situation is different in comparison to my friends because of my father and grandmother. My dad has a heart condition and will be turning sixty this year and consequently, he has a higher chance of getting the virus and it being life threatening. Likewise, my grandmother has severe asthma and has an even higher chance of dying if she were to catch the virus. Because of this, I have been strictly following the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines to shelter in place as well as the Tennessee government's stay at home order. Although, it has been fairly difficult because my friends and family have not followed the same guidelines that I have been following. Many of my friends have not been social distancing at all after Tennessee's government decided to lift its stay at home order. A few of my friends have found that seeing their boyfriends or girlfriends, seeing other friends, or going out to eat is more important than social distancing or quarantining.

Some states have begun lifting their stay at home orders and have seen a spike in cases and deaths. In my home state of Tennessee specifically, phase one of reopening has begun. After the reopening began, there was a 130 percent increase in cases in Tennessee. In the U.S. according to recent updates, by May 14, 2020, there has been a total of 1.47 million confirmed cases with 88,144 deaths across the U.S. and it is rising every day. The amount of deaths correlating with COVID-19 has now surpassed the American death toll of both WWI and the Vietnam War. The sad thing is, the death toll and infection rate continues to climb however, many state governments have decided to open everything up once more, massive amounts of citizens are refusing to wear protection while out in public, and violence has begun between mask wearers and non-mask wearers.

When we look back in America's history, we can see how America was able to overcome various epidemics going back to the smallpox breakout from 1633-1634 that killed 70 percent of the Native American population. In the beginning, America never truly quarantined as many families in the 14th century had done during the Black Plague, also known as the Black Death, outbreak. One of the first mentions of quarantine due to an illness in America was during the yellow fever outbreak. After attempting to have state and local

governments handle the containment of the illness with zero success, Congress passed the federal quarantine legislation in 1878. This did not conflict with the states' rights, it showed that the federal government was ready to involve itself in the quarantine activities of America. The legislation gave the Surgeon General the ability to, "[m]ake and enforce such regulations as in his judgment are necessary to prevent the introduction, transmission, or spread of communicable diseases from foreign countries into the States or possessions, or from one State or possession into any other State of possession."

Many epidemics in the U.S. such as the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 and the diphtheria epidemic of 1921-1925 have given me hope due to the fact that, in the end, a vaccine was created and licensed in order to lower the chance of America having another wave of that disease. For example, the Spanish flu, though it was horrible, and many people died from it, ended with the very first flu vaccine that would later stop millions of people from being infected.

I believe that COVID-19, as of May 15, 2020, is far from over. There are still many waves to come unless people begin to quarantine and take precautions, or a vaccine is created. History shows that, in most cases, it takes a great deal of time to create a vaccine for diseases of this capacity. For this reason, I believe that many government related actions could be taken in order to prevent further spreading of the virus. In the end, I have decided to follow the advice of scientist and doctors who are seeing firsthand, what this virus is made of, what it does to a person's body, and how it spreads.