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The COVID-19 Crisis: A Student's Account of an International Apocalypse

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The COVID-19 Crisis: A Student's Account of an International Apocalypse

Author Bio

Although the COVID-19 Pandemic is not something of fiction, this piece itself is a story that many students can relate to and that should be documented. As a future physician, I must be able to take the morals of my experiences and turn them into renditions that will allow in improvements in many different directions. I wrote this in an essay/short story/ journal entry format because I felt that it would best portray the swiftness and urgency of all of the situations being discussed. My name is Ambika Kapil and I am a Senior at NSU. I am the Halmos Senator in the Undergraduate Student Government. and am also a member of the Indian Student Association, Pawsitivity, and the Pre-Med Society. I write because it is my outlet for talking. I love to inform, converse, and learn from those around me, but when I write, that is when I can take a second to see what my brain is retaining. I was inspired to submit to this journal because of the great care that my professor, Dr. Aileen Farrar, put into helping me be sure of my writing.

THE COVID-19 CRISIS: A STUDENT'S ACCOUNT OF AN INTERNATIONAL APOCALYPSE AMBIKA KAPIL

The selected journal entries that follow exemplify the process of me integrating this deepening well of the unknown as I watch some of the biggest milestones of my life come into contact with an unresponsive state. This all starts on 3/12/2020, when I, and the Shark Preview student in my room, watched the unraveling of a Sci-Fi novel enter the real world.

Shark Preview check-in. Parents everywhere. "How is the University responding to the COVID-19 crisis?" What is that? I heard it faintly when I walked past the news channels playing in Flight Deck, but it was not related to my Physics Exam, hence, not related to me. 145 students present. Smile on. My group of 20 prospective students are ready.

*8 hours later, I return to my room to see the student I am hosting sitting on my couch. I began to take my shoes off and ask her about her day when suddenly a loud sound filled the room. *Bing* "Class Suspension Notice: COVID-19 / CORONAVIRUS UPDATE #4: Effective at 11:59 p.m., March 12, 2020, all classes are suspended..." I feel my head start to spin as I hear my neighbors scream in freedom and joy. School. Is. Cancelled. I look up and see the Shark Preview student staring with complete fear in her eyes. "What is going on... Why is everyone screaming?" "BIKA! THERE IS NO SCHOOL TOMORROW! WE ARE FREE!"*

03/19/2020: Apocalypse. Loud. After last week's fiasco I had no clue how to react to this week. This one seemed to be longer than any other I have experienced in a while, and I still have received no communication about instructions for those staying on campus. Did the Housing Office forget about me? I wish that I could just close my eyes and sleep all day, but I am so worried. The University just announced that all classes will be online for the remainder of the semester. My parents want me to come home but have explained to me that once I do, I cannot leave my room for 14 days.

I have the choice of staying on campus all alone or going home. In both options I have the chance of going completely insane. I am staying away from all of my neighbors and am keeping to myself to ensure my own safety. Alone. Confused. Isolated. For the past seven days nothing has been okay. I am confused. What is going on?

My fear is poisoning my whole existence. I close my eyes and try to beg, whatever mystical being is out there, to make me feel better, to inspire someone other than my parents to call to check up on me, for me to excel in my classes even though I can barely get myself out of bed. I just want to feel relevant. The world is dying but here I am confused about my own life. What is happening? I am selfish. No, no, I am just confused.

03/26/2020: In such an effort to get myself back on track, I tried to take a very positive approach. My computer completely stopped working on Monday during my first Zoom class. Smile. I completely ran out of food. Laugh. I was surprised with the number of assignments. Smile. But I finished them, so it's ok. This is what is expected of me. I am living on the same floor as 5 confirmed COVID cases on campus. Panic and Smile. I cannot tell my parents. Alone in my fear. Alone in my lies. I cannot leave my room. Every time I open my window, I see a new person entering the infected persons' rooms and leave as though there is nothing to be worried about. I called my Coordinator. Do not fear COVID! Dial tone. What is going on? I am so lost.

My parents are still telling me that I should come home. Isolation. I would rather feel bad on my own rather than go home and disappoint my parents. Selfish. What is this new pain and despair I am experiencing?

I can only focus on what I am feeling because I have yet to have a full conversation with anyone. Silence. No official institutional decisions. It is so loud. The silence is DEAFENING. Students vs. Institution.

04/02/2020: *I am a fraud. I represent the students but have no answers to give. I have no clue what is happening! But shouldn't I? Student Government, as an organization, prides itself upon being able to learn information front hand and for having the ability to make direct changes ALONGSIDE Administrative members. But I just opened text message #143 reading, "Hi! I would love to vote for you in the SGA Elections if you can give me the scoop on what is happening on campus right now." I closed my eyes and allow tears to roll down my face. I am confused. FRAUD!*

04/09/2020: *The last flight to Dallas until further notice was on 4/7/2020. I had to go home. I had to pack my entire room in less than 72 hours. Quick! Cars. Storage unit. EXAM! But there's no time! But everything is okay. I made it, and I am okay.*

I am happy to be with my family, but they do not seem happy to see me - I may be a carrier, after all. I need to ease their worries before I am finally allowed to walk around my house. I can breathe. I am free. I am home. My family is acting normal again. I no longer want to cry. I woke up this morning and ACTUALLY got out of bed. I CAN improve in my classes. I am hugging my sister and am cooking dinner. My life is returning.

04/16/2020: *I have let the pain flow away. The sun is shining, and I have finally noticed the small victories that I am making as I navigate this "new normal." I am staying focused on studying hard and loving my family harder. They are all that I have right now. I am giving myself a hug and a pat on the back. My voice is free to speak about the inconsistent and inappropriate manner that is the handling of the COVID-19 crisis. I am inspired. I am not broken. I am a leader. And right now, I know my peers are tired. They are confused. They feel pushed aside. However, I realize that if I wait until I am no longer too afraid to act, write, or speak my mind, then I will simply become one of the silent voices that have been disregarded in our time of need. We will survive this.*