

## UNITY DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC: HOW THE FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE MADE US UNITE AGAINST TWO DISEASES

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Since March 13, 2020, the lives of many students across the United States have changed drastically. Little did we know that we would be experiencing a major historical moment and that it would not be the only historical moment that we would experience within a short period of time. Tension has been building up about COVID-19 since the end of February. A virus that seemed so far away and out of reach, yet somehow we still felt the anxiety and still thought about all the “what-ifs.”

I was scared to acknowledge that this would become the condition of the United States soon enough, which it did. Who would have thought that the ability to physically go to school and work, take public transportation, hang out with your friends and eat out would turn into a privilege? A luxury? I started to deeply think about how I took all of these seemingly normal day-to-day activities for granted. As the days passed by and the number of cases only seemed to go up, I felt trapped. I felt stuck and hopeless. I craved human interaction and the ability to see my friends and relatives in person rather than through a computer screen. I started to only think about how far away the day was that I would be able to go back to living life normally.

However, I quickly realized that what was once normal would not be normal anymore. It took more than just the coronavirus alone to realize the flaws within this idea of “normal.” Amidst all of the tension and uncertainty caused by the coronavirus, the murder of George Floyd added even more tension and seemingly changed everyone’s perception of normal forever more. My definition of “normal” was not seeing a Black man being suffocated by a White police officer in broad daylight. Yet it happened. And it took the recording of George Floyd’s murder for people to understand the deep injustices and racism that are woven within the American justice system. For some reason, this scared me more than COVID-19 had scared me in earlier months. I felt like I was even more at risk since I am black. Hatred and racism seemed to be the deadlier disease, and many people felt the same way. And still do.

It was only a matter of time before protestors took to the streets of every major city across the U.S to protest the killing of innocent black people in the U.S. I felt the anger. The pain. The fear. I felt all of it. Social media became my outlet to speak on this injustice and make my voice heard. I felt connected and close to a lot of people by doing this because we were and still are fighting the same battle. Fighting the same disease of racism. George Floyd’s murder quickly became revolutionary and allowed all the racial injustices that have been occurring to be brought to light.

It became more than just about George Floyd. It became about Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Ahmoud Arbery, and so many more. Their killers were still roaming the streets unconvicted and free. Justice was not being served. But this only made us come together to fight for it. Fight to change the idea of normal because the killing of innocent black people is not normal, but has been normalized by the justice system. Racial microaggressions were normalized when they should not be normal. It has been swept under the rug and neglected until now. This disease of racism and hatred has been manifesting itself within the U.S for too long. It has killed and affected so many lives just like the coronavirus, and it took the 8 minutes and 40 seconds of George Floyd’s death to prove that. To make people want to do something about it.

There are many problems with the world’s idea of normal, and as a student, I’m happy to say that I’ve learned about ways that I can change it and become a part of the much-needed revolution that is occurring. Even though I may be stuck at home, I have learned that my voice is not limited and in fact, is more powerful than ever. Whether it be indoors or outside in a protest, my voice makes all the difference when it is amplified by the voices of others.

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