

FIGHTING CRISIS: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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With our country in crisis due to a pandemic and a war against racial injustice, somehow students are still expected to keep study habits, turn in assignments, take assessments, and be ready for class as if nothing was going on at all.

As a Philadelphia resident and Philadelphia School District Student for most of my life switching to a private school on the main-line forced me out of my comfort zone and gave me a “culture shock”. Even before our country was in a state of emergency I found my school's expectations and demands to be quite unreasonable, for me at least. I had to participate in sports and clubs and maintain a rigorous course load on top of my 2-hour commute each way. Now with the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement in full effect, these demands seemed much more unreasonable.

My 2-3 online classes a day starting at 10:00 AM weren't the issue; it was everything in between. How should I explain to my chemistry teacher that his request that our 10-minute long video includes little to no background noise, may not be doable for me? Was he going to tell my 1 year old sister that right now wasn't the time to exercise her vocal cords, or my neighbors that their grass doesn't need to be cut every day, or to my other neighbors who were going to have their cookouts pandemic or not?

Who was going to tell my History teacher that my research on World War I might be halted as I was looking at a “war” from my bedroom window? Perhaps I wouldn't be able to remember the date of each battle as I had to remember what time our city-wide curfew was that night. Just maybe the location of the European cities may escape my mind as I was trying to remember what local grocery store was not looted and would be open on a given day. Who knew keeping track of the death tolls on either side of the war would be too much to bear as I was still counting how many black and brown people have died this year due to police brutality.

When would my math teacher learn that the rules for radical expressions wouldn't seem so “radical” in comparison to the people's demands for justice?

Being a student during these trying times allowed me to realize how little the mental health of students is prioritized. With the feeling that the weight of the world is on our shoulders, it isn't fair that we must maintain an already unbearable workload. However, as a student, I understand the blame shouldn't solely rest on teachers as they are trying to be as accommodating as they can, while still upholding standards set by an administration that lacks student perspective.

So, as we return to school in the Fall, what will happen? Will there be mandatory mental health checks? Time to meet with counselors built into our schedule? An outlet for students to feel their voices are heard? What will be done to undo and untangle the damage that has happened as a result of being a student during these unprecedented times?

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