

A YEAR OF CHANGE

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2020 is a year that will inspire writers, artists, singers, and producers with its events and memories, and will definitely make its way into history textbooks of future generations. As a junior in high school during the pandemic, I can provide a short, yet unexpected breakdown of the past few months that set the stage for the future around the globe that will never be the same. The quarantine brought worldwide chaos, and many nations will never regain economic stability and peace within society that they had prior to COVID-19.

March. The fact that everything managed to go so downhill so fast it is unreal. In the first few days of March, most Americans heard of coronavirus for the first time through social media and monitored the escalation of the virus in China. Skip forward less than two weeks - schools and jobs close and families are ordered to stay inside, and new deaths are recorded on a daily basis. Store shelves are empty as the world goes into a deficit of masks, tissues, and all forms of disinfectants. School transfers to online classes through video calls and online work, and students, including me, thank the universe for a break near the end of the year. We still go shopping for prom dresses, take online SAT prep, and prepare for graduation.

April. This April's Fool joke becomes absurd and people begin to stress. Students are notified that all activities are canceled. All SATs are canceled until July, and chaos awakens in the junior class. With college applications around the corner, we have to get all prep and tests done ahead of time - and, here we were, stuck in uncertainty with no solid plans on how to move ahead and face college plans. People are afraid and stay home, yet cases continue to go up in the US.

May. AP tests are taken online after CollegeBoard shortened the usually 3-hour long tests into online 45-minute assessments. Teachers email students back apologizing for not being able to explain, help, or give insight regarding anything school related. Seniors are outraged after being robbed of graduation, as they graduate through Zoom from home, stuck in the same 4 walls with the same people for the past 3 months. Students still try to manage online school, but most struggle, including me. I have personally realized that I gained absolutely no new knowledge since online school started and cannot even imagine where school planning goes from here. The lack of in-person teaching, inability to ask questions anytime, and limited tutoring or supports stops students from getting the most from their classes. George Floyd is murdered. Social media takes over and a great, powerful force begins to grow nationwide.

June. Graduation forgotten as streets of all states are taken over by thousands of people who march for black lives and against racism and police brutality. Many students' names are seen on petitions against police brutality, unjust judicial decisions, and governmental downfalls. Many are injured in the protests and the BLM movement makes international news. Soon, riots and looting of stores start, and the nation faces chaos. Copious amounts of police, followed by National Guard, flood cities and use excessive force on protesters. Neighborhoods are invaded and raided, small businesses are trashed, innocent Black lives continue to be killed through hate crimes and ignored. Many people begin to protest the stay-at-home orders and necessity of wearing masks in public, and cases go up continuously, while the rest of the world begins to recover from this crisis. Some colleges announce that they will excuse SAT or ACT requirements, as they consider the pandemic at hand and the inability to take the tests during this time of uncertainty. Juniors can relax, to an extent.

July. The premature transition into yellow phase in a nation that protests basic orders that are made to slow down the progression of the virus leads to the second wave. Florida and Texas have an enormous increase in cases as people that have been stuck at home flood the open vacation states, as more contact than ever occurs at a time where social distancing is more than important. Florida becomes the new hotspot of coronavirus cases, meanwhile, the rest of the world watches America fail as an "advanced nation" when it comes to handling and tackling a virus and racial injustice. Many schools around the nation are planning to return to in-person teaching, but people refuse. By putting kids into closed buildings and keeping them there for 7-8 hours per day, exposed to thousands of others, and not being able to avoid contact or constantly wearing a mask, such a decision would not help prevent this pandemic. This leads to Trump's outrage and threat to defund schools that plan to stay closed and completely online, as well as banning the CDC officials from testifying and speaking up about the illogical decision of making kids go back to in-person classes. Parents and kids feel heard but not understood, and no one knows what to expect for their own or their kids' education and upcoming school year.

I have no idea where the world and I go from here. The effects of this pandemic, racial justice movement, and global shift are

permanent, and we will have to adapt to this new reality. Life goes on and we have to be able to recover from any curve ball life throws at us. We as a community have to support one another in this process of healing at this difficult time. I plan to intensify my college planning and research, as well as help my family in friends either mentally or physically to help them grow as well. We all have to start changing to help this nation back on its feet through elections, charity, and more movements that bring improvement and support for the people. This year is the year of change that will forever be remembered and recorded in future history books.

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