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QUARANTINE THOUGHTS

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COVID-19. One hyphenated word sparked the beginning of a global lockdown. Within the lockdown was chaos. People dying every day from the coronavirus. Even today, some people are holding onto life the best they can in hospitals.

The night of Thursday, March 12th, 2020 at around 9-10pm, the School District of Philadelphia sent out a robocall telling students that there would not be school the following day. At the beginning, I was overjoyed because who wouldn't like a day off from school? But one day extended to two weeks. Soon after two weeks, schools began to shift online. The rest of the school year would be held online. Teachers could not be as strict because not everyone had the same circumstances. To be honest, I really don't think I can remember much of what I learned during the online school period. I think learning face-to-face is better than learning virtually. The shift online was gradual, but soon a better schedule was set for the rest of April-June.

The shift online must have been difficult for some, but fortunately I moved into online learning smoothly. I had realized during the two-week break that COVID-19 was getting out of hand and also spreading very quickly. I missed seeing my friends and, strangely enough, I even missed seeing the school building. My parents, being essential workers at a mailing factory, kept working. It was just my younger brother and me at home working on our schoolwork separately. He was an eighth grader graduating from a small private school (where I am an alum) targeted towards the poor Cambodian neighborhood.

On the day of my brother's graduation, his classmates went one-by-one to receive the traditional parting gifts and also take a few pictures. My father brought my brother while I stayed home, missing an event I had been looking forward to since the start of his eighth-grade year. I do remember that my brother's school tried to make the graduation as special as possible because it was also held online.

Coronavirus isn't the only thing that has impacted me though. I use social media frequently, more specifically Instagram. That was where I learned of other things happening around the world. Many racist and police brutality issues were rising during the pandemic. Due to not having cable, I don't really watch TV. The antennas don't get signals as well anymore in this day and age. But I do feel pretty well informed. After seeing some eye-opening posts on Instagram, I would Google the information on the news to also figure out a little more about what was going on. Seeing all the racism and people fighting I just wondered: Why?

Are we not all humans? Do we not all see the same sun and sky? The same moon and stars? Don't our feet touch the same ground? The same grass? Why is it that our skin color, eye shape, or just appearance in general affects how a person views someone else? What makes it so wrong to be darker or paler than anyone else? What makes it so wrong to have curly, wavy, or super straight hair? Why is it right that the whiter one's skin, the more benefits and less judgment one can get? But at the same time, one still does not escape from it all. One can be white, but still be condemned for being "superior" when they could be the most selfless and loving person. One can be a light skinned Asian and still be judged for their almond eyes, thin noses, and V-shaped jawline. One can be African American and be discriminated against for their darker skin, smell, and lips. Why?

Over the still ongoing quarantine, I have stressed about school, but my thoughts always come back to this world. Seeing the attacks, the court cases, the constant Instagram posts to petition, really makes one wonder. Just why are people the way they are? Even animals and non-living objects survive in harmony better than humans. Isn't that just sad?

Take for example a grape. Grapes are beautiful and delicious fruits. Grapes come in many colors. For example, green and red/purple. Reddish purple grapes are considered sweeter while green grapes are more sour. But see, even though they differ in color, they are still grapes. They're still under the same family and the same species. One may like the other more due to taste, but in general one can see that grapes honestly don't taste that different depending on color. A green grape is a grape and a purple/red grape is also a grape. Humans differ in color too. But can't humans also be like grapes? Just think about it: take away the skin and are we not the same? Same human heart, soul, and mind.

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