

Coming to Terms with Reality

Vallhery I. Pierre Louis - 9th Grade

Michael K. Krop Senior High School; Miami, FL

I changed a lot over these past years. I mostly learned about the reality of "real world." In seventh grade, my middle school closed in March 2020 because of COVID-19. I did not go to school in person for my entire eighth-grade year. That year, we learned online on Microsoft Teams. During that time, I had a few online friends. I have questioned many things, like my religion and purpose during this pandemic.

In my personal life, I have journaled on and off. Really, the hardest thing to accept about myself while reflecting on this pandemic is that I have changed. I am the opposite of Vallhery before the pandemic. As a middle schooler, before the pandemic, Vallhery was carefree, exuberant, and not bothered by what people thought. I have since become more self-conscious about everything. This change has impacted everything, including my school life, dance life, and social life.

In general, I feel like change comes in high school because it is just a different environment where you begin to touch the surface of adulthood. But facing that change while in a pandemic helps build a different type of wall around new people. My social life has taken a huge plummet. I am more reserved. A friendship that was strong at the start of the pandemic ended. I want to talk to people, but I am more fearful of even starting a conversation with others. *Vallhery usually has a lot of friends. Vallhery usually can say hi and start a conversation.* But now? Vallhery is nervous even to hold a face-to-face conversation with any human being. I'm reluctant to make friends and less likely to speak out loud in class. I was so quiet my teachers and classmates would forget I was there. The pandemic was really the flop of everything in my life. Being reserved is not my nature and did not help me get anywhere. It has made me hold back on those things I want to accomplish.

The deaths of this pandemic just made me accept that your life can suddenly end at any moment, which is so harsh. This is one of the reasons why I journaled on and off. I needed to express my thoughts and feelings somehow. I have become sensitive to deaths. It's to the point where I would rather write about it than even speak on it. It is troublesome and damaging.

I have reflected a lot on this pandemic. I reflected on my social life mostly. I reflected on my holding back. I reflected on my friendships. I reflected on accepting disappointment. So far, I have learned that overcoming hard stuff will lead me to become a better person—hopefully.