

## **Changing Perspectives: Covid-19 Through the Eyes of an Asian-American Teen**

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When I initially heard about the Covid-19 pandemic, I disregarded it; simply writing it off as the media attempting to cause a frenzy. Reality did not allow my ignorance to persist for long. I was quickly forced to face the unsettling reality that Covid-19 was spreading like wildfire, and its effects could be both random and severe. Although the threat was still half a world away, it wasn't long until I experienced the very terror that my relatives in China had been living through. My family, my uncle, baby cousin, and countless others were all on the front lines of a battle that the world was losing. However, even in these trying times, I found strength and hope in places that were uncommon to some.

At the start of the pandemic, I had been enrolled in a virtual school for a number of years. However, in contrast to the sentiment felt by many of my peers, I viewed online learning to be a source of comfort and strength in trying times, allowing me to access my education and further my academic goals from anywhere. I took solace in knowing that I was doing my part to keep my family and community safe without putting my most important endeavors on hold. As the pandemic progressed I could not help but be grateful for all the years I spent acclimating myself to online learning, the long days and lack of social engagement finally paid off, I came to appreciate the full value of alternate learning institutions and the benefits they held. Isolation from external events also came as a blessing in disguise, providing me with ample time to focus not only on my classes but extracurriculars. Most importantly, I was able to concentrate on the work at hand and hone in on my true passions, devoting my time to topics that spoke to me, such as neuroscience and psychology. I set both short and long-term goals for myself and worked on attaining them within a reasonable time. I was on a schedule and planning for success. Eventually I started diving deeper into the true concepts behind my coursework and not just the surface information provided, this allowed me to not only grasp a fuller understanding of my classes but awakened my inquisitiveness. I started asking questions beyond what was given on a mere ten-page lesson and began to recognize the building blocks behind teachings. Eventually, due to the introduction of vaccines to combat Covid-19, schools, slowly but surely, started to reopen; I could not have been more thrilled. Over the summer I was given the opportunity to enroll in college courses for the upcoming semesters, I was able to enact the same routine, work ethic, and drive for knowledge I garnered during the pandemic.

Unfortunately, during this time, fingers were pointed and Asian-Americans became a target for a whirlwind of violence and hateful slurs such as "Kung Flu" and "China Virus." These terms quickly circled the nation and provided angry citizens a scapegoat and outlet for their frustrations. Often, when we see racially motivated attacks on the news we sweep them under the rug because they do not affect us personally. Some may stop to remark "how sad it all is" though they quickly forget and move on with their day. I realized this stark truth after wondering: why was no one doing anything? These people, my people, were falling victim to

brutal attacks yet an entire nation merely stood by offering their condolences as the violence took place. I never imagined that in such a time of progression and acceptance I would fear for my Asian-American mother's well-being and safety. I never imagined her life would be put at risk simply for existing. I never imagined she would face such adversity and discrimination in a country she has lived in for over half her life, and worked tirelessly to acclimate to. These are the cruel realities that not only myself but Asian Americans around the world have endured since the start of the pandemic and will continue to struggle with.

My experiences throughout the pandemic were ones I will never forget. Filled with emotion and heartbreak yet also rich with new experiences, the lessons I've learned will stick with me throughout each step of my life. During isolation, I was able to find my passion, solidify my plans for the future, as well as establish productive and effective study habits that haven't let me down since.

Seeing other's perspectives during the transition to remote learning provided me with a newfound respect and appreciation for my former school, the resentment and frustration I once harbored over the lack of engagement turned to respect and admiration, the realization that myself as well as my fellow classmates were prepared for a change no one expected and many are still coming to terms with was and always will remain a priceless gift.