

My piece is about the nature of home and growing up. As every individual has their own experience, it can be hard to relate your upbringing and homelife to others, especially sharing about the formative childhood years. The idea and definition of home, in the western world, varies wildly and each definition comes with a set of experiences and feelings unknown to others. A home is a place or a person, it is constantly inconsistent.

In this piece, I create a quilt out of found fabrics, ranging from old clothes to scraps from rolls of fabric. Each square represents a facet or memory of my homelife coming together to create a symbol of comfort and childhood, a homemade quilt. The reverse of the quilt has a poem about home, spelled out using the same carpet material as the border, camouflaging the words to show how we try to hide our true feelings regarding the home.

As quarantine has forced us into our homes, I have been reflecting on my own home. Home, to me, is where I grew up, my childhood home is full of memories that have shaped me. By creating a quilt, a creature comfort, I am physically combining these experiences into a single piece.

Rey S.

Passaic, New Jersey

Life in Containment

Rey S.



The COVID-19 quarantine and social distancing measures have affected millions all over the world; this paper is about two contrasting quarantine situations and how they affect our views of the current state of the world. I interviewed two different people to see how their lives had changed in the last few months, while discussing their thoughts on the future of the US. The quarantine creates extremely isolated experiences that create personal bias. We presume that everyone is sharing our experience and limits our ability to think creatively/to problem solve. We need to consider the world outside of ourselves especially now.

Life in Containment

I interviewed two vastly different people in vastly different circumstances. MA, a 17 year old high school junior, currently self-isolating in New Jersey with her family; and CK, a 28 year old librarian and activist, working from her apartment in Washington with her girlfriend.

I started by interviewing my friend MA. She told me that staying at home was awkward, her parents worked outside of the house and she and her younger sister spent most of their time in school; between extracurriculars and social engagements, there wasn't a lot of time to spend at home. She confided that she feels guilty for feeling bored during quarantine, that she has the privilege to feel bored, that she has time to take a walk and catch up. She told me that "coming out of quarantine with a new skill", a sentiment posted all over social media, is not a universal message, and people should focus on staying safe.

"It's healthy to be selfish, validate your own emotions and check in". She explains that the quarantine has allowed her the chance for self expression. She puts together conventionally 'weird' outfits without the fear of judgement from others, the only people around her are her family. Similarly, we talked about how self-isolation has led to experimentation with hairstyles, from cutting, dying, shaving and growing it out, the quarantine has allowed people to take more risks with personal style. MA recognizes her privilege during quarantine, that aside from completing assignments to maintain her grades, there is no more schedule to life. School starts at 8am and ends at 3pm, everything outside those hours is unrestrained. The deadlines from school feel pointless, and the thought of returning to the pressure of school, gives her anxiety. Trying to learn during a global emergency feels pointless; all the mundane normal things become pointless in quarantine.

This lack of a daily schedule leads to a brand new lifestyle. She describes her eating habits as random, with a daily family dinner as a constant. Dinners that used to be a time for her family to catch up with one another and ask "what did you learn today?", have turned into conversations that talk about coronavirus without directly mentioning it. Making food has become a solitary activity, with MA worrying about wasting food, circumventing this by only making enough for herself. It seems that every action has become something to worry over, that even getting groceries is something to feel guilty about even if it's not panic buying.

MA is the only one struggling with morality during the coronavirus, for CK, a librarian, she's had to make adjustments to continue her work and activism. For her library system, they've been shifting to a distance model. The physical library has been closed since mid-March, and since that time they have transitioned into providing services through webchat, texting, phone calls, emails, social media, youtube, and other distance means. CK continues to offer reference services, programming, and free telehealth appointments through the library social worker. She has also helped create a system for virtual library card registration so that she can assign people with barcodes and PINs to access their databases, as well as helping others navigate. Unfortunately, though these measures have helped her community, for those without access to

the internet, they also remain isolated from these resources. From students who don't have a reliable connection, to homeless people, the library hasn't been the same without its physical presence. "We've had meetings with local schools to ensure we have materials children need to do their homework. And we've been compiling webguides on local social services and mutual aid groups, but it feels like it's not enough to help everyone we used to".

Aside from limiting her work in the library, quarantine has limited CK's activism work, "my activism has been dramatically changed due to the lack of mobility. I have been stuck in only the areas I can physically walk to. That means that much of the in-person actions needed right now (e.g. car blockade in front of ICE detention centers, delivering groceries to people, etc.) are inaccessible to me". Social distancing has made it harder to be active in our communities, and aside from helping financially, it seems like there's not much to do. She's had to adapt to the work from home style, and focus her efforts on what she can achieve, "I have been heavily researching disability activism because disabled activists are the best teachers to learn from about how to change the world when your abilities are limited by structural means". As COVID-19 has become the center of attention for the foreseeable future, everything else, no matter how important, has been sidelined. Trying to make deadlines and survive the week has taken precedent, and without being able to safely protest, activism communities have been relying on strikes to make a difference. On May 1st a general strike occurred, where Amazon, Walmart, Instacart and other companies' workers asked the general public not to shop or buy from their respective corporations to support their strike.¹ Instead of typical civil disobedience, CK has moved to more behind the scenes work, focusing on getting the general public aware of the struggles others are facing, "my activism has been largely information based, designing flyers, promoting mutual aid networks, helping communicate efforts to different audiences, doing spreadsheet work for mutual aid groups, things like that which I can do from home".

Aside from worrying about how those in less than ideal circumstances are doing, isolation is already causing detrimental effects, as MA put it, "coronavirus is trauma for the whole world". When quarantine is over, it's going to be hard to go anywhere without the fear of infection, or to resist falling back on social distancing measures. At the start of quarantine, it was easy for people who are not immunocompromised to dismiss their fears, "it's easier to process when you weren't vulnerable, when you knew at the end of the day you wouldn't die". But as more research has been done, that has been proven untrue. A recent article talked about the possibility of strokes in coronavirus patients.² While staying at home and practicing social/physical distancing are the easiest ways to stay safe, that hasn't stopped some people from continuing their lives without the recommended precautions. MA told me that as much as she

¹ Medina, Daniel A. "As Amazon, Walmart, and Others Profit Amid Coronavirus Crisis, Their Essential Workers Plan Unprecedented Strike." *The Intercept*, April 28, 2020.
<https://theintercept.com/2020/04/28/coronavirus-may-1-strike-sickout-amazon-target-whole-foods/>.

² Rabin, Roni Caryn. "Some Coronavirus Patients Show Signs of Brain Ailments." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, April 1, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/health/coronavirus-stroke-seizures-confusion.html>.

misses her friends and family, she doesn't want to risk anyone's health, "by doing your part you'd stay safe, you can die if you mess up".

Aside from safety, this global pandemic is about money and profit, that instead of prioritizing health, it's about how large corporations can make more money from the pandemic. It's forcing us to reexamine our future in a new light, what colleges are offering refunds, what jobs can you do from home? MA said "[corporations] are gaining sympathy points without changing anything, a virtue signal. These companies are taking advantage of the situation for money, putting the ethical responsibility on the individual for staying inside and staying safe". We are being forced inside and while the downsides of late stage capitalism are being exposed.

MA isn't the only one who thinks that the quarantine will force the US to change. CK confided that her organization has been planning on their next moves, "I know that many other labor organizing is happening across the US (and the world) but it's also happening in the midst of a growing neo-fascist movement, so it's hard to say where we'll end up and how that struggle will shape labor in the years to come".

Conclusion

Although the future of the US is uncertain, it will take something bigger than quarantine to change the current systems in place, and we can't allow our own biases to actually change anything. Everyone who comes out of quarantine with the idea that it only affects their future plans and prevents them from seeing friends and family, doesn't see the tremendous burden it has places on those unable to afford the luxury of staying home. To move forward as a society, we have to take a step back and gain perspective of our situation, we have the resources and ability to bring equality to all of us, and now is the time to do that. It's easy to ignore the rest of the world's problems, especially when they're not affecting us, but just because we're in isolation, the outside world still exists with all it's problems, and we need to show compassion rather than falling victim to our own prejudices.

Literature Cited

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