**Covid Diaries**

I remember it was around mid-March when I first saw a few trending headlines that an elusive virus was discovered in Eastern China. Sitting in history class a few days later, I can recount a friend showing me a joke about the virus and saying, “I hope this does not get to Canada,” I responded by saying, “I hope so too.” Now, sitting here eight months later, I cannot help but be in disbelief sometimes that it is my reality. Although this life hurdle has affected me in many negative ways, I still think that I have learned so much about myself and my community, my environment, and, quite frankly, the globe.

Within my community, I have seen many positive and negative changes. For example, I find that people are generally more caring for others now. This general idea of social responsibility amongst us, which I don’t think was ever a considerable topic beforehand. However, with that being said, I think that generally, people are starting to get tired of hearing about Covid-19 constantly. I find people are starting to take the precautions less seriously, not because they don’t care about them, but because they are getting comfortable with them. I have also seen people spread this false discourse online about the virus being fake, or how masks do not actually work. I have even seen an anti-mask protest firsthand, which was shocking to say the least.

Covid-19 has affected everyone in one way or another. No one can deny that. When reflecting on this global crisis, I can think of many negatives and positive impacts that it has had on my life. For example, I fell back in love with reading, something that I was a fan of throughout my adolescence but lost track of in high school. I have also picked up many new hobbies, such as drawing and photography. I was finally given a break from the Western world's hustle culture and was able to explore different avenues of creative expression. I felt as though in the earlier stages, this was an opportunity to slow down. All of this is great; however, it does not conceal that mentally I have been struggling.

I have not always struggled with mental health issues. In fact, for a while, I thought I was one of the 'lucky' ones who never had a problem with anxiety, depression, or sheer loneliness. I've always had lots of friends, a loving family, and a comfortable lifestyle. However, in the wake of a pandemic, my mental health plummeted. Although I have learned coping mechanisms like breathing techniques, I am still struggling with a constant feeling of anxiety about the world's state and, selfishly, my future. I have always been a planner. But in the chaos that is 2020, I've felt more lost than I ever have before. The mere idea that seeing friends' risks getting you or them sick is a massive worry for me. I always feel drained, lonely, and have this sense of longing for social interaction, which I am still coming to terms with and learning how to understand.

Another source of torment I’ve experienced in the past couple of months is simply the mundanity of life. It seems as though every day is the same. I Wake up, get myself ready for the day, do online school, and work. There is no excitement in anything anymore. My social, academic, and work-life is all done on a screen. I go from my computer to my iPhone, to my computer, and the cycle repeats. Yes, my classes offer diverse and engaging material, and different topics discussed in classes are stimulating and enjoyable, not to mention that I have freedom with my time and schedule. But there is no variation to it. I am not getting the experience of going to class, hearing the voices on either side of me, having discussions with classmates, maybe even getting a parking ticket after class. I am merely getting the course material in the most direct, unobstructed way. From a learning standpoint, this is fantastic, but in regards to stimulation, that’s a different story. I miss the everyday unexpectedness of everyday life. And the worst part about it is that I am turning to social media for the hits of dopamine that I am missing out on with these missed daily interactions, perpetuating this positive feedback loop.

But with this struggle of mundanity, I have come to appreciate the little things in life so much more. I took out my grandmother's antique Limoges porcelain to remind me of her beauty and strength while having my morning coffee. I get a bouquet for the house every week. And don't even get me started on the feeling of going to bed on freshly pressed linens every Sunday (which is now indescribable). I think that this is one of the most important lessons I have learned through all of this. I found that the simple pleasures of life really make life worth living. The changes to my day-to-day routine, such as going to school, going to work, and going out on the weekends, have profoundly impacted me. Although the main aspects of my life have changed, the time spent alone has taught me more about my values and aspirations in life. It has taught me that being alone is a good thing and something I need to get more comfortable with.

I think that this time in history provides a fantastic opportunity for medical anthropological research. Medical anthropologists are trained with tools to analyze behavior, treatment, economic and political events, and many more areas of life in terms of health on both the individual and societal level. Medical anthropology allows us to look at epidemics and pandemics in a holistic light that encompasses all aspects of individuals, communities, and of course, culture. By looking at different areas affected by the pandemic, medical anthropologists can get a more in-depth insight into how the virus affects people, maybe even in some strange unknown ways. Medical anthropologists can use past epidemics and pandemics to understand what we are currently experiencing and perhaps even provide an outlook on what the virus's landscape will start to look like at a societal and global level.