

ARCHIVES OF COVID-19

UP Recollections and Reflections



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ESI Press

Emerging Scholars Initiative (ESI Press)

University of Pretoria, Lynnwood Road, Hatfield, Pretoria, South Africa,

<https://esipress.up.ac.za>

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Cover design: Stephen Symons

Typography & design: Stephen Symons

Cover photo: Caitlyn McGregor.

Compiled and edited by Bronwyn Strydom

Printed and bound in 2023

First published by ESI Press 2023

ISBN: 978-0-6397-6864-9 (print)

ISBN: 978-0-6397-6865-6 (e-book/digital)

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Photo: Caitlyn McGregor.

FOREWORD

The outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic in late 2019 left no part of the globe untouched. In March 2020, the University of Pretoria shut its doors to contact learning and less than a few weeks later, South Africa was brought under a national lockdown, restricting people to their homes except for essential needs. These rapid and drastic changes, coupled with the loss and fear brought on by the spreading virus, were experienced in a variety of ways by all South Africans.

The University of Pretoria Archives, the memory bank of the University, traced and recorded developments at the University as the University Executive, Administration, Professional Services and Academic staff and students responded to the “new normal” brought into being by the lockdown restrictions. Official announcements and responses were collected and filed into the UP Archives collection. But among the staff of the Archives, there was also a sense of urgent need related to the capturing and preserving of the voices and personal perspectives of the UP community as a whole, both staff and students. On the initiative of Prof Karen Harris, the UP Archives launched the first Covid-19 competition in 2020, the #UPStaySafe photographic competition. Photographs submitted to the competition gave a poignant and insightful look into the lives of UP students and staff, largely working and studying from home in isolation. In 2021 a second competition entitled “Recollecting Covid-19: 365 days in lockdown” was launched in order to further preserve the memories of the UP community in the Archives, in which submissions ranged from essays and poetry, to videos and voicenotes. As South Africa entered a third year of restrictions in 2022, a final competition took place, giving UP staff and students the opportunity to reflect on the themes of “Loss, pause and hope” related to the ongoing global pandemic.

For the arrangement, editing and compilation of this publication, acknowledgement and heartfelt thanks must be given to Dr Bronwyn Strydom of the UP Archives.

May these images and reflections act as a memorial to those who have experienced loss and grief during these difficult times.

Prof Caroline Nicholson
Registrar



Photo: Paris Nzima.

HELP US REMEMBER: UP Archives launches #UPStaySafe competition to capture life during COVID-19 lockdown

Posted on July 17, 2020

The UP community, scattered across South Africa's provinces as well as beyond our borders, is facing the unprecedented global COVID-19 crisis in different ways. All of us, whether undergraduate or postgraduate student, academic staff, administrative or professional services personnel or a member of the Executive, are trying to create a sense of "normality" and cope with our various situations.

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The UP Archives would like to capture and preserve for future generations the way in which members of the UP community managed and coped with the lockdown, which has required us to go against many of our most natural instincts and stay away from one another and our places of work in order to stay safe.

#UPStaySafe is a competition launched by the UP Archives in collaboration with the Department of Institutional Advancement and PDBY to create a photographic memory of how we as students and staff of the University of Pretoria managed the coronavirus pandemic.

All students and staff are eligible to **win a prize of up to R5 000** by submitting selfies and other photographs that reflect on how you see life during lockdown, and how it has affected you: we want to capture and archive the fears and frustrations, but also the hope and humanity that emerged during this extraordinary period in human history.

UP Archives would love to receive your submission so we can record your story.

Remember: The uncertainty is certain, the way forward uncertain... but we do know that this too will pass and one day we will reflect back - together - on these remarkable days.



Photo: Reneilwe Sedibe. Who knew that taking out the laundry could look so effortlessly beautiful?

RECOLLECTING COVID-19: 365 Days under Lockdown: The UP Archives Remembering Competition

Posted on March 26, 2021

26 March 2021 marks a year since the University of Pretoria closed its gates under the COVID-19 national lockdown regulations. Classes went online and university life as we knew it ceased to exist. Scattered across the nine provinces of our country as well as beyond our borders, members of the UP community all faced and adapted to this unprecedented global crisis in different ways. Whether as a UP undergraduate or postgraduate student; or an executive, academic, administrative or professional service staff member, we all tried to create a sense of “normality” and coped with our various situations. The uncertainty was certain, the way forward uncertain – but we did know that this too would pass and one day we would reflect on these days.

Given the success of the UP Archives #UPStaySafe photographic project launched in 2020, the Archives has decided to launch another remembering project to reflect on a year of being in lockdown: *Recollecting COVID-19 – 365 Days under Lockdown: The UP Archives Remembering Competition*. This competition, in collaboration with the Department of Institutional Advancement, aims to create a written and oral memory of how we, as students and staff of the University of Pretoria, managed and excelled while living under lockdown.

All students and staff are invited to submit a:

- **Poem / Limerick / Song**
- **Commentary / Story / Reminiscence**
- **Drawing / Sketch / Video clip**
- **Spoken word poem / Voice note / Recording**

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

that reflects on how you saw life during lockdown and how it affected you: the fears and frustrations, the trauma and tragedy but also the hope and humanity during this unprecedented time.

These recollections will become part of the UP Archives' collection, where they will be safeguarded for future generations to reflect on how members of the UP community overcame in a time of global adversity.

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Photo: Allen Compaan. Mzansi Lockdown 1.

UP ARCHIVES COVID-19

COMPETITION 3: “Loss, pause and hope”

Posted on May 6, 2022

As we enter the third year of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the University of Pretoria Archives would again like to call on the UP community to add their voices to safeguarding the memory of experiences during the pandemic. In the previous two years, the UP Archives collected both photographs and written experiences from UP students and staff to add to the University’s memory bank of life during the Covid-19 pandemic and under lockdown. These illustrate well the limitations, frustrations, break-throughs, struggles and triumphs of living in the “new normal” of lockdown, online learning and changed social and work settings.

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This year, we are again interested in gathering the stories and experiences of UP staff and students during the pandemic with the themes of loss, pause and hope.

First of all, we would like to consider the theme of “**loss**” in its various dimensions resulting from the pandemic as a means to preserve the significant personal impact of the virus on the lives of many at UP. This is a more poignant view of the way that the pandemic has affected the UP community and will add some weight to the archives record as a memorial to those who have passed away or lost loved ones due to Covid-19.

A second theme which we would like to explore is the idea of “**pause**”. How has the pandemic and the changes which it has brought about caused you to pause and reconsider or reflect on life? How has the pandemic caused you to pause?

Furthermore, we would also like to look forward and also investigate the hopes and aspirations of the UP community. What have you gained from the experience, how have you grown and what are your hopes for the immediate and long term future? These questions relate to the idea of “**hope**” -- the third possible theme for contributions.

Written, visual and audio entries are welcome.

Entries and enquiries can be sent to archives@up.ac.za.

GRIEVING YESTERDAY'S EVERYDAYS

Maryam Mohamad Al Mahdi

18th March 2020

The beginning

I have a routine, whenever university seems to become like a battlefield during the week: I have to head back home on that weekend to lick my wounds before the next round, that was the plan. I was at the bus stop, as usual, you can always count on the Tshwane buses to come 30-45 minutes late and leave you burning in the heat. Luckily, I had already prepared a boredom kit, YouTube videos, first on my list FTD facts, "10 Surprising Facts About the Coronavirus". At this point, the whole world was either thinking or talking about the Coronavirus.

Finally, the bus arrived! This trip was different, it seemed like every conversation taking place had a common theme – Covid conspiracy theories. The consensus was along the lines of China teaming up with Russia and manufacturing a virus for population control. I am not normally an eavesdropper but it was entertaining listening to such absurd conversations.

In the beginning, I don't think I took the pandemic seriously; uncertain times were seemingly exciting times. When you are a student and university gets cancelled leading to an extended holiday, I can almost guarantee you, you won't hear a lot of complaints. This was also my first pandemic you see; I was intrigued. I know, I sound crazy.

26th March 2020

Lockdown

Cyril Ramaphosa announced 21 days of lockdown the day before in South Africa. Honestly, lockdown never phased me; when you live in a West African Muslim household odds are you've been in lockdown your entire life the only difference is now the whole nation knows how you feel.

Reality started to sink in when I started watching the statistics of the number of new cases. You go to bed aware of 927 new cases and wake to 1170 new cases; the growth was exponential.

Regardless of all the panic, for some reason I convinced myself that the pandemic was short term, that my life would go back to normal in a matter of a few months.

1st April 2020

Stage 1: Denial

Okay so nothing has changed, new cases are still increasing every day, the economy is rapidly crashing, the unemployment rate is drastically increasing, universities and schools are still closed but I'm fine, I'm good. Everything is going to go back to normal soon, I give it until the end of 2020, tops.

I knew I wasn't going back to res anytime soon, that I better get settled in at home. Ladies and gentlemen fasten your seatbelts Covid-19 is going to be a bumpy ride. So, I made a plan to get ahead whilst waiting for the pandemic to end. Over the next couple of weeks, I started getting into yoga and exercising regularly throughout the week; I wanted a summer body that no one would ever witness. I started watching online Udemy courses to prepare me for the next quarter and semester. I began cooking and baking a lot; the electricity bill has never been so high. I also invested a lot more time into my spiritual being in terms of religion. The denial stage lasted a long time for me; being delusional was bliss.

Somewhere in May online university commenced. From that moment forward I've never produced results like that academically, not even during my high school career. While a lot of people gained a few pounds, I lost a couple and I felt spiritually rejuvenated.

I noticed around August that people were beginning to experience breakdowns with the on and off lockdown stages and the newfound restrictions. I always thought it was because those people didn't have a plan or system like I did. At that time, it never occurred to me that my "great results" were conditional; I clung so much to the thought of normal life returning soon and that I'd be so ready for it.

12th December 2020

Stage 1 and 1/2: Between denial and anger

The academic year ended and the state of the nation didn't improve, worst of all, no mention of a cure. I was trying to be optimistic, my manifestations had to be realized, it wasn't supposed to be like this. But that it's okay, I told myself, I had to be a little bit more patient. At this moment normal life almost seemed like a fantasy. I would have never admitted it back then but life was becoming a bit more unstable. Online school meant distance learning; distance meant not all friendships would survive. The pandemic meant closed borders for some countries meaning that it would now be almost two years since I've seen my dad. He was supposed to come to South Africa on the 10th of December but it just wasn't possible. All hope was not lost; I got early acceptance into res for 2021 and UP seemed to be leaning towards the idea of reopening the residences. It just had to be a matter of time until the campus was reopened, we're going back to normal!

20th March 2021

Stage 2: Anger

I moved back into res the weekend before; I was excited; I had my room, my own space. Ironically, I couldn't wait to get away from home as home felt like my new battlefield and res was supposed to be my new haven.

After the first few days of 2nd-year computer science, things began to get tough. I never realized this but when your degree challenges you and you're surrounded by people who are experiencing the same thing on campus it eases the stress a bit. There I was lying on the floor covered in tissues within my isolated bedroom at midnight, feeling like patience is over-rated. I don't know about other people but when you're on the floor at midnight this seems to be the perfect time to reflect on how life did you wrong. Covid-19 came and cancelled 2020, closed the borders, killed relationships and threw my mental health into the gutter; universities managed to compress a year's work into fewer months which only led to more stress, that's the summary. Oh, and I swore if I ever heard the phrase "Keep safe" I was going to lose it. When one goes through a lot of emotions, one gets drained, so soon after my emotional roller-coaster I just fell asleep on the floor. I would not recommend this, the floor isn't that comfortable.

22nd March 2021

Stage 3: Bargaining

I've never been known to be an angry person; my anger is always short-lived especially after an emotional explosion. So, the next step, as insane as it was, was to make a deal with God. If I prayed my five daily prayers on time as well as an extra one at midnight, this pandemic would end like maybe next week Monday or Tuesday around noon-ish and everything would go back to normal. I promise you; I knew better than that but, I wanted to be delusional again. I started to take comfort in Netflix and fast food for a while after that day. I believe I contributed about 30-50 percentage of Uber Eats profits towards the end of March onwards. "Exercise" was no longer in my vocabulary. Exercise for who? Not for me. I had no plan.

31st March 2021

Stage 4: Depression

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Life knows how to kick you when you're already down. I went back home. The university felt like a battlefield again but I came home to something even worse. Forgive me, but I'm still healing up until this point, I don't think I'm strong enough to talk about it yet, but what I can say is, I think there's a lot of ways that someone can lose something or someone to this pandemic. I believe we are all aware of how the high unemployment rate can affect the economy but I don't think we reflect on how it affects an individual. When there's a high unemployment rate there are more crimes committed on the streets that can hurt people, people that you love.

Once again, the floor and I were reunited, this time the bathroom floor. I sat there in the dark, crying and questioning everything, including my own beliefs. It took an hour until my mom busted into the bathroom, she held me and told me that I needed to be strong for her and my sister. At that moment all I felt was weakness, and once the tears dried, I just felt empty.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

31st October 2021

Stage 4 and 1/2: Acceptance around the corner

These were my 365 days of living through Covid-19. There's so much more to my story; this pandemic continues to be a journey. I think I'm reaching a point where I'm realizing that the reality we live in now is going to be our new normal for a while and that's okay or at least it will be someday.



Photo: Simphiwe Harvey

COVID-19

Lungelo Xaba

It was like a scene from a horror film
As rose like an incoming tide
We the public were told to stay inside
To hide

As the death toll rose
And the hospitals began to overflow
South Africa held her bleeding chest in woe

The sounds of laughing children
Replaced by the growing beeps from ventilators
Not family but isolation came with worry hand in hand as visitors

Alcohol was banned
And with it came a decrease in car incidents
Coincidentally depression thrived
As those below the breadline struggled to survive

My fellow South Africans dealt with sickness, loss and starvation
As those who live hand to mouth went without
Increasing the poor's aggravation

Now to survive we cover our faces
And wash our hands
No, sir not a handshake but an elbow will do
If you sneeze? Stay a metre away and ah yes Bless you



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Photo: Ruvimbo Musiyarira. Sometimes when you're tutoring, you bake. No one would ever know!



Photo: Cindy Tshalata. Life during lockdown

MASKS AND EMPTY HALLS

Caitlin McGregor

Behind every mask is a voice that whispers
“When, when will it end?”
Behind every mask is a song
Waiting to be sung again.

Behind my mask is a voice that is trapped
Holding in my pleas
Behind my mask hides a scared literature student
Who has forgotten how to breathe

The lecture halls are empty now
There’s not a single soul in sight.
Silence echoes through the walls now
Where imagination once took flight

Masks rest upon the ears
Of the future generation
The masks remind us of the year
Spent in isolation

We remain apart and distant
And a new way of life has unfurled
Until we’ve built enough resistance
Our homes will be our worlds

We’re unified in this endeavour
And united we shall stand

For one day we shall be together
Learning hand in hand.

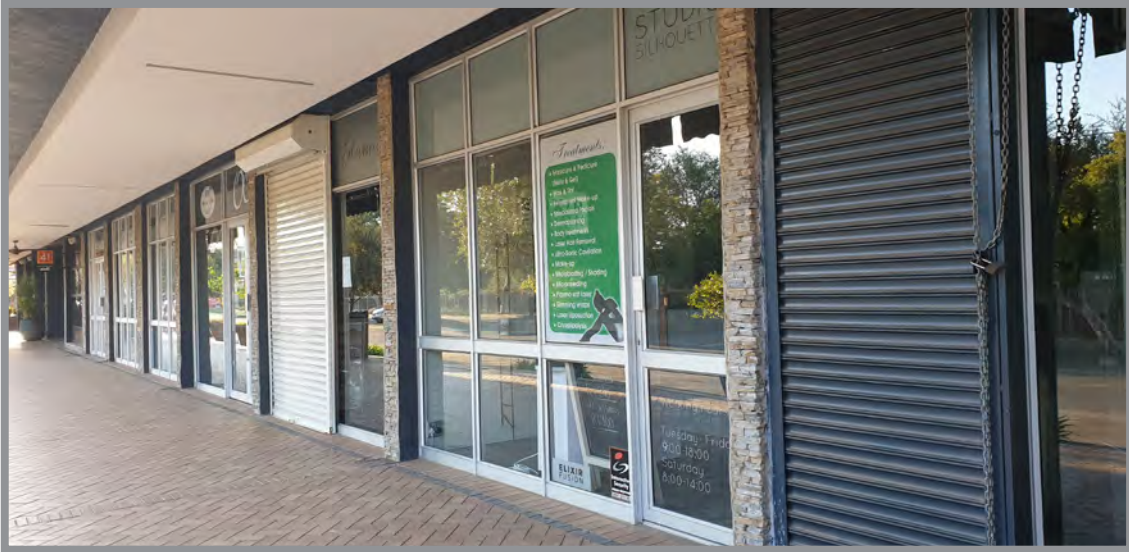


Photo: Elsabe Olivier. Closed shops.

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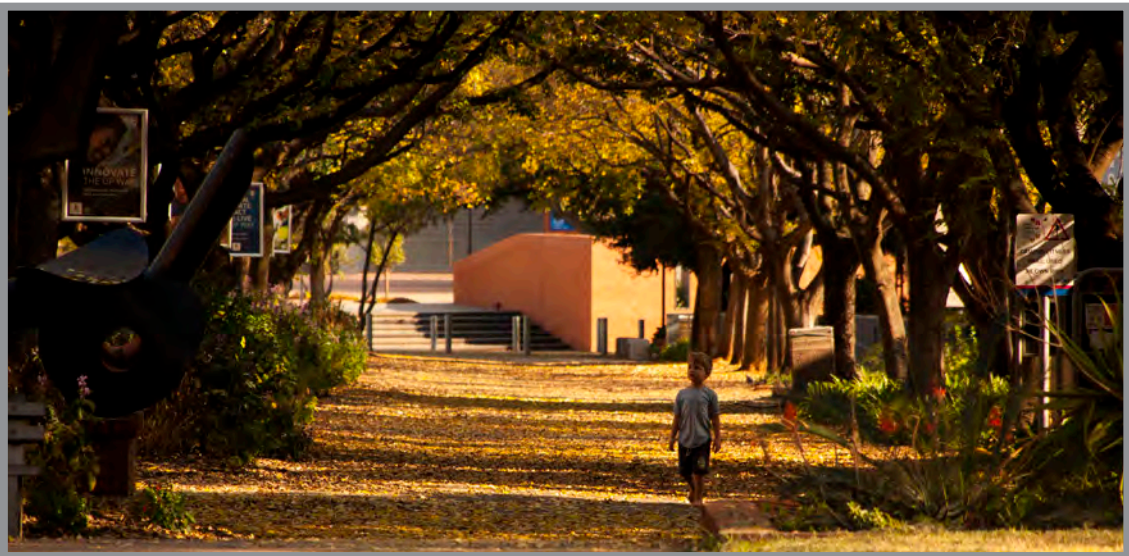


Photo: Carel Willemse. A future student.

Kopano Kgatla

The first time that I heard about Covid-19, we thought it was a lie. We didn't believe that indeed this disease exists, even when our president told us to wear masks all the time to stop the spread of this disease. We didn't believe him; we continued living our lives the way we were used to. Until our president announced that we are in level 5. Many people started to realise that indeed the disease exists. The world was shaking. I believed that it was the end of the world. Many things were restricted: schools, stores were closed. Many people were not even allowed to visit another country. Online classes were introduced. When online classes were introduced, I was so angry, frustrated and scared because I didn't know anything about learning online and because of the fact that I wanted to explore varsity life.

Online learning has had a bad impact on the lives of the student. As we all know, we come from different backgrounds. When I heard that students will be attending classes online, I thought it was going to be as difficult as climbing a mountain. Hearing the word online learning made me scared, because I didn't know anything about attending, writing online and I was one of those students who come from a disadvantaged background, who didn't have a laptop and didn't even know how to use a laptop.

I was attending classes using a phone until my parents decided to buy me a laptop. While I was attending online, I found that it was more difficult than attending physical classes. The shift from the physical classroom to online classroom made my learning experience completely different from other students. I am used to passively listening and taking notes in physical classrooms. The physical way of thinking made it difficult for me to adapt, but I had to accept the new learning environment with an open mind.

After accepting that I was able to understand the benefits of online learning, this changed my mindset, and I became a better-prepared student for online classes. Another challenge I faced was that I did not have a strong Internet connection required for online courses. Due to these technical problems, I even faced the problem of not being able to launch virtual learning and other platforms that online learning required because I did not know anything about technology and computer applications.

I was unaware that high speed and a slow Internet connection can play an important role in how quickly I can access my courses. My Internet connection at home became so fast and I even

found a place where I can get technical support for my connection if I get any technical problems. I used to find it difficult to manage time through online learning because it is brand new to me and requires a lot of work and intense work. I even found that, unlike physical classrooms, online learning provides a flexible time. I had difficulty adapting to the time required for online learning, so we know that in order to achieve better learning results, it just requires time and effort. I decided to check the factors that were affecting my time during the learning process.

Since, in my previous school, I have learned in a physical classroom, online learning made me adapt to these changes. It was difficult for me to write assignments using technology, difficult to do projects, and I struggled with an inability to understand the live classes. I missed face-to-face interaction. This inhibited my communication skills because I could not communicate with my classmates and teachers every day. Interacting with teachers and classmates is one of the most important aspects of taking physical classes.

The teacher can help you if you are having trouble understanding an assignment. If your teacher is too busy, you can ask your classmates for assistance. To get help online, it was very difficult because you'd have to email the teacher and being notified immediately is not guaranteed. In some cases, my teacher may not have Internet access and I was experiencing problems during that time. This is where I saw that taking a physical course is most likely to be the most effective way to learn communication skills.

I even used to attend and write the online test without preparation virtually online. Since I was difficulty adapted to pen and paper tests and assignments. I was losing hope when I experienced online learning difficulties or failed a test. Lack of self-motivation was one of the main reasons that I was unable to complete coursework online and failing. But the coursework and strict schedules helped me stay on top of things. I did not have friends or know my classmates. It was hard for me to ask some questions when I didn't understand because I didn't know anyone. In order to improve my learning experience, I realized the importance of communication. Communicating and interacting with other students gives me an opportunity to learn from them and improve my academic skills.

Due to the new learning model, I was also lacking technical skills in video and emails. Face-to-face communication with teachers, peer activities, even when we were doing group work, it was difficult for me to find my group. I realized that the importance of communication, for better online learning can enhance my learning experience. It gives me a platform to communicate and interact with others so that I can learn from them and improve my knowledge and skills.



Photo: Douglas van Reeuyk. Elon Musk once said "When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favour" and that is exactly where we as students find ourselves in these pressing times. With the help of new technologies we are able to stay connected and continue to learn and develop our craft within a digital learning environment even though the world around us echoes with uncertainty (9 June 2020).

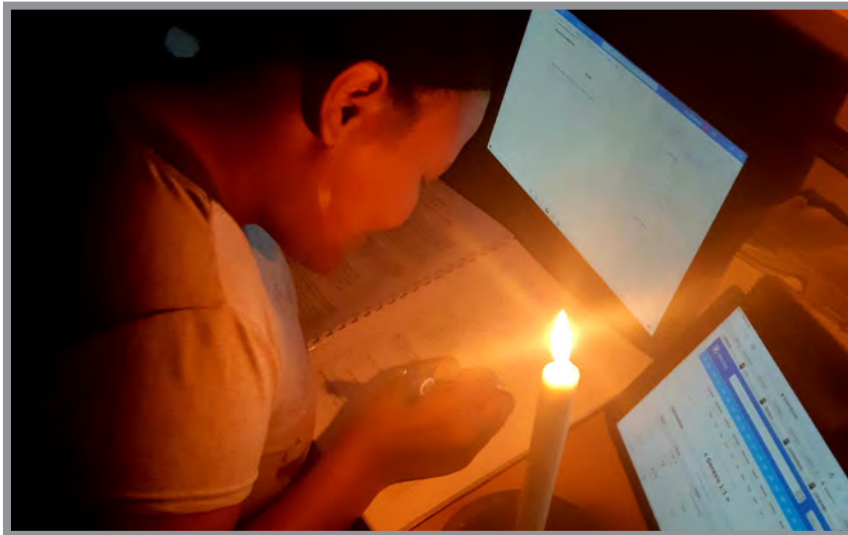


Photo: Nokuthula Malinga. With this picture I want to show that despite loadshedding or anything else that may affect my education, I will still be studying (24 May 2020).

FOR GAILIE.

Kimberley Oosthuizen

The world's in divide
"social distancing" they call it
The biggest irony of the millennium.
How can it be "social" if it separated me from you.

Because

The last thing you said to me was "I'm so proud of you"
The last I said was "Goodbye, see you soon"
The last thing you saw was a woman wearing blue
The last that sees you is a hazmat suit.

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Now

I line your plot with pixelated poppies
because they were your favourite.
A bunch of graves, a bunch of "Gailie"s
Rows and rows, copies and copies.



Photo: Ilse Wepener. A day in the life of a dental student (18 June 2020).



Photo: Matete Mangena. I see life as hard to live mainly because I had to adapt to a whole new way of daily living which is wearing a mask. The lockdown affected me so much in terms of my academics as I had to change from the usual way of physically being in a lecture room with a lecturer to remote learning. It also changed with me having to put in extra effort and no longer relying on somebody else. And so much so, studying from home was not the best for me due to having to share the same room with siblings who fail to understand that you are not there to play, but to study as normally as you would when at res.

THE EMOTIONAL ROLLER-COASTER

Karen Netzer

What? When? Where? How? Why?

Confusion

Panic buying, fake news, lockdown, toilet paper

Curves that will not flatten

And our homes became our world

Social media replaced our social scene

Some met their families for the first time

Some enjoyed this, some did not

Increased gender-based violence, increased suicides, loss of jobs

Alcohol's catch 22, xenophobia, goodbyes to loved ones

Missing family, missing friends, missing travel

How many waves? How many lockdowns?

And gardening, baking, knitting, exercise, learning

Quality time with loved ones and pets

Prayers at home and home-cooked meals

Vaccinations...

...Vaccinations

Blurry ethics, conspiracy theories, politics, mutations

Dried-out hands, exhausted hearts, anxiety

Are dolphins in the canals worth all of this?

And we learned to appreciate nurses

We learned to appreciate teachers

We learned that we are resilient and united

We learned about the beauty in modest weddings

Funerals without family and friends
Running out of hospital beds
Running out of ventilators
Running out of grit

And we witnessed Ubuntu
We learned to adapt
We were proud of our governments
Sometimes

A year of ups and downs



Photo: Louis Scheepers. Morning walks.



Photo: Thule Mlandu. A photo of my grandmother making masks for us during lockdown.

MIRAGE

Fezile Luthuli

It's 2020, my final year in high school. I was anxious about ALOT. But I never thought one of them would be if I'll even write my final exams, will I even go to university? When I first heard about Coronavirus, the first thing I thought was, "This name is too funky for it to be dangerous". When I heard it was from China I automatically convinced myself it was fake news [that's a joke, why aren't you laughing?]. I'm from South Africa so I turn everything into a joke, including this virus or maybe it's a coping mechanism, who knows? We even made a song about it and a dance as well. "Coroonaa, Nokuthulaaa". If you're a qualified groovist you know exactly what I'm talking about. I like to think of Covid as a blur, a mirage. I knew something was there, but I couldn't really make sense of what it was. But I knew this was serious the moment it started to invade and conquer my loved ones. It had my uncles and aunt's lungs at their knees pleading for just a breath of oxygen, a known luxury we didn't know was a privilege. The privilege to live. When Covid hit, she hit hard with no mercy. She didn't have a target market, she was out for everyone, she affected everyone. Whether it be emotionally, physically or psychologically. What connects us all is that we all lost something. I lost family and a sense of purpose. It was difficult to find myself when the world was in such a dark place. The world was sinking in a black hole of pain and trauma. Retrenchment, death and depression found themselves in the same house like long lost relatives. Covid-19 put us all in paralysis. There was nothing worse than to watch the entire country suffer before your eyes, knowing very well that there's nothing you can do to help. The government tried their best but they're only human. God was our only hope at this point. 2020 gave not only South Africa but the entire world a wake-up call. Everything can change in a blink of an eye. You'd swear we were going through a zombie apocalypse era with everyone wearing masks. Paranoia possessed all of us at some point; the country was a breeding ground for a potential mental asylum. Conspiracy theories flooded through social media, and who can blame them when our minds have been enslaved by something that came out the blue? It's 2021, Covid-19 is still alive. She's stronger than ever now but we're elite. What she didn't know was she prepared us for the worst. She forced us to find different streams of income, to think out of the box, to love deeply and to cherish each and every moment of our existence. She thought she defeated us, but she taught us to have GRIT.

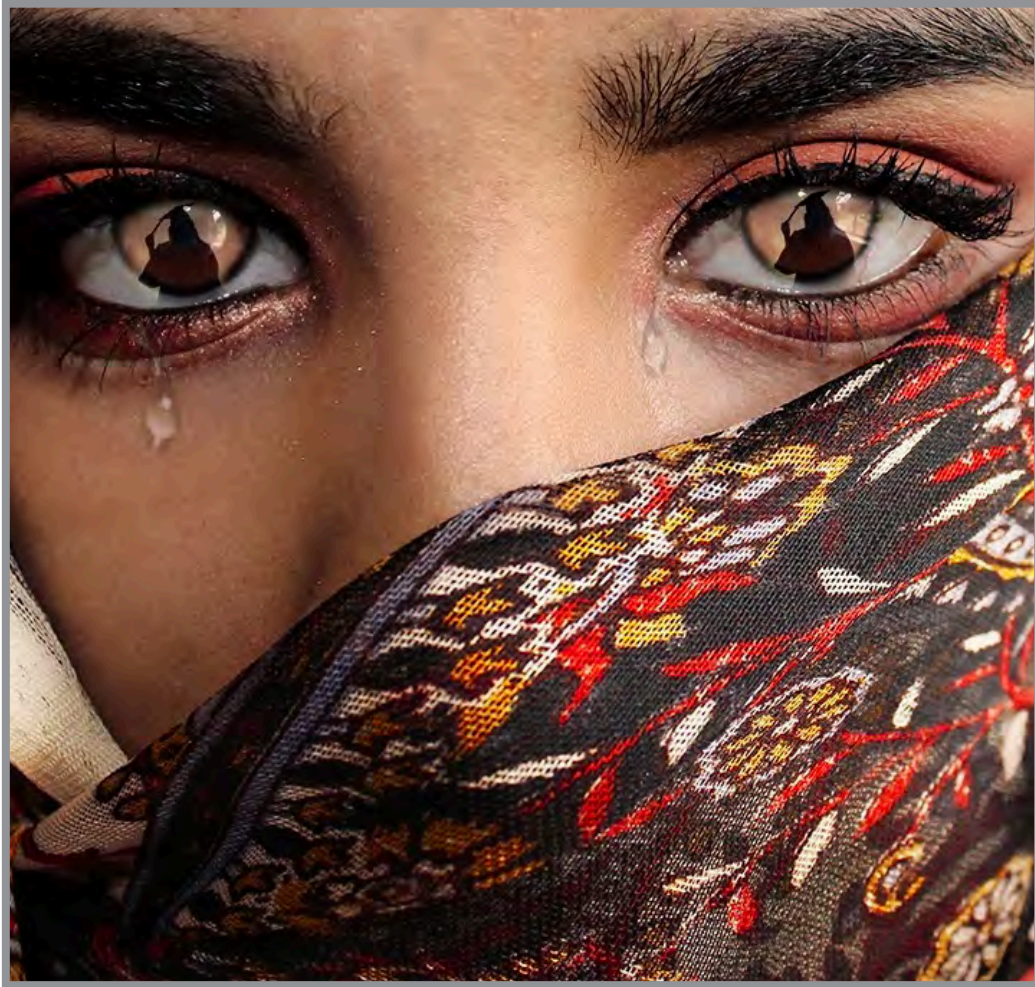


Photo: Ashlin Bhemraj. Don't let viral tears wash away inevitable dreams - JUST BREATHE (26 April 2020).

COVID-19: A TALE OF GRIEF

Sharon-Rose K Chisango

...in which by the end of the plot, many will own a tombstone with the name of a loved one...
In a place not far from here is a graveyard,
It's not the kind of place anyone would like to visit,
It's no longer filled with just strangers,
Each tombstone is a memory –

Graveyards are not like they show in the movies,
Postcards and flowers,
Memories filled with sentiment-

They will not tell you that it is impossible,
To transform ink into blood, that can rush through veins,
You cannot add flesh to bones by these words,
I have tried-

They will tell you about the bricks,
Stone castles in the sky,
But darling, what you seek cannot be crafted-

Cannot be spoken into existence,
You cannot hug a poem, my love,
Cannot store wind in a jar,
Believe me, I have tried-

I know you are sad,
I am sad too,
Let me sit with you here, by the sidewalk,
When you are ready, there is another place I want to show you.
I will sit with you anywhere.



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Photo: Nokulunga Zwane. "Each one teach one." Kids are visual learners so why not teach them using art? For me it's super important that my siblings know about this virus, and how to prevent it.... When you get lemons make lemonade, it's high time we turn this negatively impactful time to something positive. It starts with me, and you (9 June 2020).



Photo: Allen Compaan. Mzansi Lockdown 2.

A SHORT PERSONAL REFLECTION OF COVID-19 – 365 DAYS UNDER LOCKDOWN

Mmamoruti Johanna Metswamere

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, I have become a participant observer of my own personal image of 365 days under lockdown. I have spent time on the first day under lockdown sitting alone at my backroom noticing everything to be peaceful and quiet outside. I have listened to the melody of birds sounding like they were talking to each other and learning a lost migratory journey. The sounds they were making became a real experience I have never had before. Through being a participant observer, I came to realise the beginning of the new age of human intelligence. Spending time in a space like this prompted me to think of an ongoing engagement with the terms of tough times like this, which requires one to expect the unexpected.

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As I was a final year student on the day when President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the national lockdown with effect from midnight 26th of March 2020 as a response to the global pandemic, I too was never prepared for a drastic change of learning and everyday life. I had to plan for the lockdown and leave the campus to return home unprepared. This took courage to face both the bad and the good times of reality. I had to decide on what is right not only for me but the whole society.

On the first day under lockdown, I made a personal diary to recollect the circumstances I found myself in under the Covid-19 national lockdown. Each day from the first felt like a decade, that came with a social, economic and emotional breakdown.

I remember when I had a conversation with my neighbour about the first twenty-one days of the national lockdown. She had no hope of how she was going to survive this new normal. She only survived by selling home-fermented beer since she is unemployed. Then when the lockdown regulations were seriously toughened, her only source of income was thrown away. This was painful.

I also remember when I first went to town for some shopping, it was a shocking moment I must say. I could not even get on a taxi because I forgot my face mask. I had to go back to fetch it, and when I went back to the taxi, the number was not like the usual, with everybody sitting and not talking to each other. When I got to town, everybody was wearing face masks too. Outside each shop there were long queues, with social distancing that was regulated being practised. I had only seen this on the television but that day it became real because I witnessed with my own eyes.

As I was having a chat with my fellow student whom I regard as a friend, he pointed out that having to adapt to the shift to remote instruction and learning is a challenge that is set in the human mind that also finds it difficult to reflect on potential problems, especially those one has never experienced before. This created fear for him as a final year student, having to prepare for the world of work that is also changing which might delay his future.

Amongst my fellow academics, family and friends, and nationals, I too felt like I am on a migratory journey. However, instead of being anxious too, I have spent this time alone and precisely as a participant of my life practicing the art of attentiveness. What emerged in this engagement was to become subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity. The kind of curiosity I developed is perhaps more critical, and critical in considering the complexity and ambiguity of life as a student under lockdown.

My everyday lifestyle and learning have become disrupted by significant measures of the lockdown that were instituted to protect us from being infected by the virus. The biggest challenge I have faced was to figure out how to maximise my studies, considering the economic and psychological damage this change brought along. It was also tense in the first three months as I had difficulty keeping track of what is set and when it is for, which made me fall behind with a lot of work.

Remote learning became one of the most daunting experiences I have ever felt, let alone seen. Learning felt strange, and not strange because of its unfamiliarity, but with how the face to face learning I knew to be normal suddenly turned out to be. Like a warrior, I was overwhelmed not only by online learning, but also with social and emotional uncertainties surrounding the threat to our human lives and the question of

what to expect and how to act in response to such circumstances.

Along the way, I have lost a lot of people whom I will miss and will never forget. I remember when we buried one relative who was unfortunate to not survive this threat. It was a disturbing experience that we have had to deal with as a family. While having to deal with such a pain, I still had to keep up with my studies so that I do not fail the semester. None of us saw this coming, and the reality and challenges which came along with this change got me to thinking of what is going to happen after lockdown as none of us know the aftermaths of this global pandemic. What I am more grateful for is all the help and support I got from the lecturers through this unprecedented time.

Despite all of this, I chose to become phenomenal and do all I could to survive these circumstances. This included the acknowledgement of the obstacles I had faced under lockdown as compared to that of people who were resistant and continued with their lifestyles as normal, as if nothing has changed.

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While the lockdown disturbed many of our normal lives to the core, on its significance, it gave me a chance to make reflection on myself. In fact, it forced me to think of my survival as a human being and gave me the opportunity to think about the relationships I keep, the meaning of life and the purpose of my existence. One day in history when this global pandemic is over, I will stand to say, I have conquered the wakeup call of human existence.



Photo: Oatlegile Tyron Ditshego. We might become friends with Coronavirus.

Inspiration behind the picture: I have created a character called Coronie for children to know and learn from. Coronie will help children and adults to always remember to wear a mask so that Coronie does not affect us humans but he continues to become our friend. Coronie is always wearing a mask to show us that if we always wear our masks, he will not infect us. This is a good way to educate children about Covid-19, as they learn from seeing. The lockdown and Coronavirus has made me create characters and ways to spread awareness about Coronavirus.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY

Luyanda Matau

The early ethics smile of our own beauty was always in faces,
until you came.

Allow me to take you down the memory lane.
When you decided to, tie our hard-working hands,
Blind our view to the sun, emptied all the streets.

Since sorrow came late to our premises from the city of Wuhan.
We all thought you will destroy our paradise
But you just shut it down and closed all the gates.
We were contrived to stay home, locked, and warmed up.
We were schooling at home because you closed the access to schools.
You became our doze in a year and half now.

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Virtual class cannot replace the contact classes,
Trust us as we cry in our terrified times,
The virtual moments are not heartfelt,
There is a cold gap between,
And whatever there is, we are still nostalgic for our old healthy habits
Where we can smile and see the smile
But nothing is yet real now.

We are not of the feeling that the upcoming generation,
Could feel what we are feeling right now.
They still too far to know who you are,
As good or maybe better than those enemies we left behind.
At least for those who would survive to see them,
Would give them a better brief about you.

Maybe there are still upcoming days to recover
Our real, rolled, ripped education.
As we walk down the road, we have fears
That you might attack us anytime.
I also see sad faces that always keep a social distance
And how long will it be?
Shakers and shapers are still learning to prepare for the fights

There's so much yet unknown
We still wondering what's next
But you'll sometimes realize the hardships you've brought.



Photo: Luyanda Matau.

DEAR CORONAVIRUS!!

Boitumelo Moimana

Your arrival favoured and hindered!

As I am sitting on my residence bed, thinking how you have caused so much damage.

Wondering if I still belong here or not.

Taking my eye off the window to check if I am still safe, safe in a university's residence.

My heart being broken, tears just falling.

Wondering if something might happen any minute from now.

Wondering if I will be able to accomplish what I came here for?

If I will be able to get my dream job because I am here for my degree, my education?

Wondering if my degree will mean a qualification in years to come?

Because my brothers and sisters are out there dodging bullets

Bullets that they could have avoided very easily.

Not mentioning the dead bodies being counted daily.

My brothers and sisters are out there vandalising a building that I am supposed to call "work" one day.

Some of my brothers and sisters are losing their jobs because of the looting that they do not even know about.

My heart is broken into pieces, hope is slowly fading.

I came here to fight academically for my future, not to be scared.

But it all seems impossible now.

I fear what might happen, not today but in years to come.

The situation is bad, will my siblings be able to finish school?

Because some are behind computers submitting assignments and homework online while others are at home.

Their school buildings being destroyed.
The residences are quiet, students have run home.
Is this the free education that they fought for us?
Is this the free education that is meant for us?

Dear, know that our futures are not ours only, but for our families too. Pray For SOUTH AFRICA!!

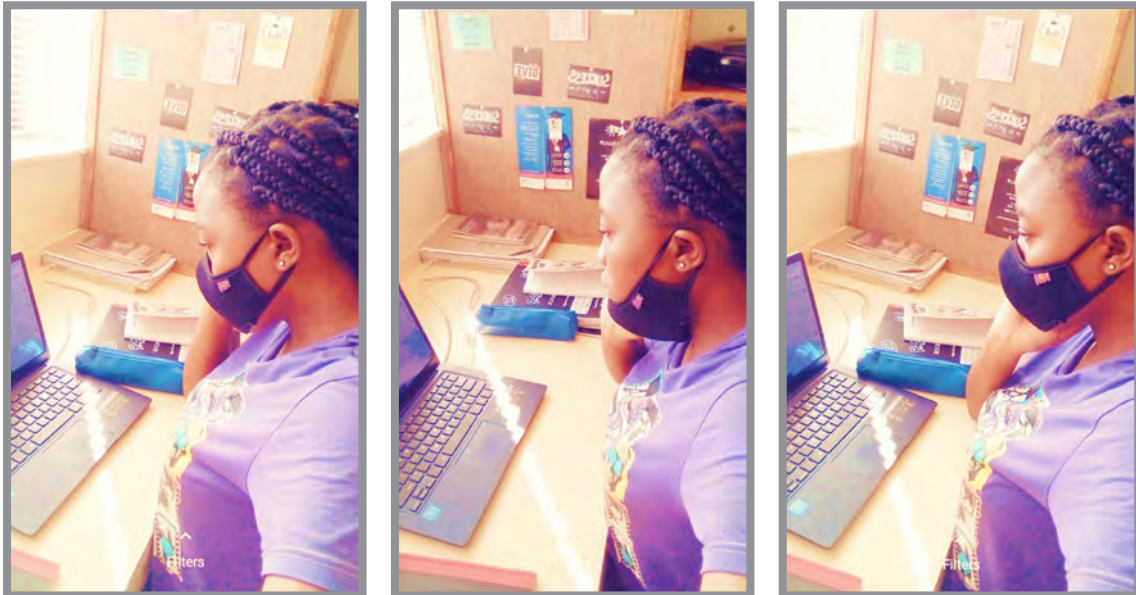


Photo: Boitumelo Moimana



Photo: Godfrey Mufamadi. On duty during lockdown, safety of the University of Pretoria. STAY SAFE, WEAR A FACE MASK.

CHANGES OF COVID-19

ED Monaledi

You are cruel and inconsiderate.
You have detached my wish and experience of roaming on campus field.
You left me uncertain if I will see my friends again,
You became a bitter segregate,
You have formed a barrier just like in geography, and all I had to do was adapt to change.
Are you here to evolve the world?
Because your presence is destroying.
You have left hospitals overwhelmed with bodies,
You have left wise ones confused of your whereabouts.
You have created trauma for families,
Some thought they will never see each other again.

You separated me from my longings I had when I was still in my school uniform days,
The wishes of sitting in the lecture hall and interacting with my instructor,
The wishes of interacting with my fellow students.
You have changed the world,
Now it is hard for me to identify my friends, they are always shielded by masks.
I was left with an option of living my life digitally,
I want you gone just like dust when it rains.

In the end you shall perish,
Everyone will be set free from your chains.
Every student will experience university chairs,
Every student will explore campus architectural buildings,
Everyone will go on streets maskless without worry.
We will soon defeat your weak mighty power you have shown.
And again we will reunite and interact together.



Photo: Khonzile Promise Mabena. The novel Coronavirus has influenced how children play, as the picture shows children playing with masks, which is effective because they are playing and learning simultaneously (20 April 2020).

LIFE AND LOVE UNDER LOCKDOWN

Samukelisiwe Zungu

As a lover of history and storytelling, during my childhood and early teenage years, I had read about the different pandemics such as the Spanish flu and the black plague. Even though I knew what a pandemic was, never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be caught in the middle of one.

The Coronavirus was all over the news. What was once known as the virus that had emerged from China, soon became a virus that affected the whole world. The first case that was ever reported in my country, South Africa was in KwaZulu-Natal. One case has led to a million more cases; the deaths keep on increasing. We are bombarded with statistics every single day. This virus has made many families experience financial constraints because of the loss of jobs and the rise of inflation since it has also affected our economy. The worst effect I can think of is that people have lost their loved ones to the Coronavirus. My aunt died at the beginning of this year from the Coronavirus and it is like I got to know a new side of Covid-19. I thought I had known everything there is to know about the virus because of all the information that is on the Internet and the news, but I was yet to know the emotional trauma that comes with a loved one dying from the virus.

It was the 23rd of December 2020 when my aunt was rushed to hospital because she was experiencing severe chest pains. Everyone in my family was so frightened because we had literally just put my grandfather to rest in October 2020 and we could not afford to lose another loved one. On the 24th of December we were then informed that she had the Coronavirus, and everyone was in panic mode, since we did have contact with her, and our cousins would always visit us. It was a possibility that our whole family was infected and the elders soon started contacting our close and distant relatives to tell them that they should not visit us since we had cancelled Christmas and we did not want to spread the virus. Christmas came and it was not so merry after all. My cousins and I had symptoms of what was a minor flu. It was even hard for us to get out of bed, so we slept until 1 pm but because we are foodies we obviously woke up when the food was ready.

This Christmas was so different because we were not surrounded by our friends and family; the air was filled with worry and anxiety. On the 27th of December 2020 about 5 nurses had come to test us and when I tell you I am never getting tested for the Coronavirus unless it is really under difficult circumstances, I mean it. Nurses insert a long stick that resembles an earbud up your nose

and keep on pushing it further into your nasal passage until you feel like it is literally touching your brain; but at least we took the initiative to get tested. We quarantined for a week which is the recommended time that people should now isolate themselves. If I am not mistaken we waited for 5 weeks for our results to come back; this shows how our labs were under so much pressure because they were dealing with a lot of test results.

We had entered the New Year being hopeful because things seemed to be looking up because it seemed like my aunt was getting better and she even changed hospital wards since she was in the Intensive Care Unit and was going to be moved to another ward for patients who had the Coronavirus but were recovering. Our family was not allowed to visit her in hospital, so we had to call the hospital every single day to check up on her since she was even too weak to use her phone. A week passed by and we just kept on being told she was improving and I remember that she even asked one of the nurses to call us because she was requesting her clothes and toiletries to be sent to her.

On the 20th of January, my uncle was informed that his wife was going to be put on life support. This sent shock waves through all of us because we were all so hopeful and thought that she was going to be with us once again; we would all be reunited and happy. Two days passed and we were told that she had died. My mouth went dry and all I could think is "why are we experiencing such misfortune in this family?". Her birthday was on the 2nd of January 2021. It is sad that even on her last birthday she did not get to spend time with her family. My grandmother who was mourning the loss of her husband had to now mourn the loss of her daughter-in-law whom she considered her daughter and my uncle who was mourning the loss of his father, had to also deal with the grief of his wife.

Even though it seemed as if things kept on getting worse for my family – we are dealing with a lot of sadness and pain – we have tried our best to heal. Valuing the people close to you is important as well as living in the present moment. Making the most out of the time you have on this earth, because it might get taken away from you, is precious.



Photo: Sieraaj Ahmed. DAY ONE: Sieraaj and Amir Ahmed, 23 March 2020, Arcadia, Pretoria. Day one of our family's lockdown (official countrywide lockdown began the Friday after, on 27 March). That laptop interested Amir for about 30 minutes on day one, 15 minutes on day two, 5 on day three, and by day four he was only interested in flinging it around the room.



Photo: Sieraaj Ahmed. QUIET MOMENT: Amir Thulasizwe Ahmed, 28 March 2020, Arcadia, Pretoria. A quiet moment, surprising Daddy when I found him "reading" on his own, pointing at items in the book and naming them (sometimes correctly, sometimes with made-up words).

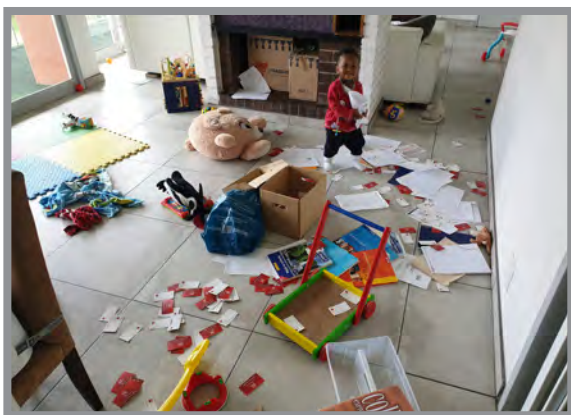


Photo: Sieraaj Ahmed. CONFERENCE CALL: Amir Thulasizwe Ahmed, 9 April 2020, Arcadia, Pretoria. What happened when Daddy had an important hour-long video call and I realised the only way I might get the hour I needed was to let him go wild on this box he had shown an interest in exploring. This was the result: one very happy baby, one very messy lounge.

RECOLLECTING COVID - 365 DAYS IN LOCKDOWN

Lerato Maris

365 days of lockdown have become a global life sentence of anxiety, awe, death, and a norm that we all were forced to become accustomed to. Covid-19 has had our lives in its unknown hands creating havoc, tragedy and an element of mistrust in each one of us. It was March 26 that our lives changed and were bound by the chains of an unruly disease, that we found ourselves prisoned by a place we call home.

It was a sad yet monumental event or happening, when it was declared by our President, Cyril Ramaphosa, that our country was going into a lockdown and that all movement was prohibited. What invisible enemy was this attacking a whole globe leaving us all captured, and enslaved, resulting in a global panic and fear for the loss of lives, as we were all unsure regarding what the war was about? It was with clarity and sadness that we at war with each other but, indirectly affecting change and having the power to either win or lose, as Covid-19 was declared a human transmitter that began with one's health and that hygiene practices were a determining factor of the spread or the containment of the disease.

There is a saying that change is good but the current change from normal to Covid-19 normal has left everyone completely confused. Students felt this shift when normalizing the new normal. It began when attendance of schools and learning came to a robotic shift, geared towards technology and being indoors. E-learning became the effect and impact that enabled what used to be, became what ought to be. Everything from classes, test, seminars, lectures, graduations, homework and projects became an online experience that unfortunately created a division between those who can afford and those who can't. The good side to this is that, it created convenience and safety as it allowed people to work in the comfort of their own homes, brought societies together in lending a helping hand when it came to food, clothes, even books and has also fostered relationships that were not there previously. Whilst on the other hand, it also saw a downside, as the vulnerable, poverty-stricken divide felt even more impacted such as hunger (especially students eating at school), no access to educational spaces such as libraries (public and private), data costs and those who cannot even afford technology such as cellphones and computers but rely on government supplies to broaden their resource network.

Sustainability of studies during this period remained a 50/50 trial in a sense that, sometimes it

was easy to work and sometimes it was not. The line between comfort and proactiveness remains thin because there is less pressure, whereas if things were normal (attendance) the pressure we got from peers and lecturers remain at the forefront because, it is a constant reminder of the actual end goal (which is hard work and getting good results). However, this change has also brought the good and bad in sustaining relationships, by the notion of social distancing, affection has decreased and anxiety has gone up among each other and whoever you allow in your space. The good side to all this, is in the broadening of networks and how webinars have become a space of friendship, networking and attendance, which leaves a wide gap for anyone to infiltrate that space, by them having access to links and invitations to attend or host such webinars. The technological community has grown so much and has shown favour to those who are resourceful or have access to such resources and those still gearing or heading towards being resourceful. The disadvantage lies with the many who remain in poverty as those opportunities and resources will remain a factor or gap unknown or empty.

This has had a major impact in research because, since remote learning is the new norm, the standard of research has risen and the pressure to produce work that is of quality and is less sensational, has created a space were people are now sensitive to what information is produced and received, the verification of is also scrutinized. Academia has levelled up, forcing students to get out of their comfort zone and be in-depth with learning, understanding and assessing all the given research.

How communities came together through these trials and tribulations, has been outstanding. Societies have come together in the fight against Covid-19 to create bonds and solidarity, by reaching out to those less fortunate and assisting where they can through food parcels, toiletries, water and sanitation; in helping combat the spread of this unknown enemy; by joining forces with organizations, the government, and as individuals in making a difference no matter how small. A disadvantage to this is being bound at home, gender-based violence increased as women and children were victims of frustrated men, who were forced to stay at home or lost jobs. This became the pinnacle of death to many women and children and such a tragedy rose to be a global movement (say no to gender-based violence and speak up).

In addition, pharmaceutical companies started booming in making profits due to a high demand of medication whilst, on the other hand, many companies had to retrench, close down, and people lost jobs leading to a high increase in unemployment. This became a problem as poverty continues to rise, leading to criminal activity to be on the rise (the need to survive).

All in all, what I have witnessed has been morbid, when it came to the loss of loved ones daily.

But it has created an opportunity to actually slow down this fast-paced life we are living, to be present with family and friends, helping out to those who seek assistance and acknowledging and appreciating what is most valuable - life, water and the ability to breathe which made me realize how health is an important factor that we somewhat take for granted at times.

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Photo: Alison Ridel.



Photo: Regina Sithole. As a student at University of Pretoria, one of the things I discovered about myself is that I can do anything whatever situation I face. This is my life during this lockdown. As a student and as a mother I am juggling school work and nursing my baby. It's not easy but I am managing and coping.



Photo: Zonke Situnda. Me and my daughter chasing a submission deadline (8 June 2020).

SOCIALLY DISTANT

Isabella Selzer

I like to be alone.

I like spending Friday nights
at home
with nothing but
my books and thoughts
for company.

I tend to distance myself
from social gatherings -
I'd choose isolation over
a party any day.

I enjoy being by myself.

I could sit and ponder
for hours on end. The silence,
a soothing melody.
Such liberty, such luxury!

It's funny how it all changes
when nothing changed.
My lifestyle, a mandate. Yet,
all of a sudden,
I feel so trapped and lonely.



Photo: Richard Scrooby. 21 in Lockdown!

UNIVERSITY DURING COVID-19: A HUMANITIES STUDENT'S TESTIMONY

Caitlin McGregor

The world was shaken and taken aback when a new virus, Covid-19, began to spread across the globe. Nobody was spared from the tragedy, fear, loss, and even death that would ensue. Many felt that the end-times were upon us, but most of the world seemed to decide that, together, it was time to adapt to a new way of life. On a personal level, the virus led me to a much-needed shift in perspective, and as the world seemed to close, my world has just begun to open.

I was in my matric year when the virus hit South Africa. I remember quite vividly the day our teachers lined us up and asked us not to panic, promising that we would be alright, and that the virus would not affect our schooling. Not long after that, the virus quickly proved itself to be far more serious than anyone had imagined. Suddenly, we found ourselves studying and learning from home. The economy suffered as the day-to-day activities were halted. I watched as this strange, new disease forced my family to close their business. Every day there were new cases, and eventually, people I knew started to become part of the statistics. The virus did not disappear as we had hoped, and by the time I was to start my first year at the University of Pretoria, I realised that I would have to continue learning from home.

My heart sunk at the realisation that I would not be able to meet and surround myself with like-minded intellectuals. My lifelong dream of learning about the arts, literature, history, and philosophy in a room filled with an aura of wisdom and knowledge began to seem further and further out of reach. It felt as if I was mourning a life which I had not even experienced yet. It felt as if the world had closed the door on all my hopes for the future.

As I contemplated these woes in the comfort of my room one afternoon, I had somewhat of an epiphany. I realised the privilege I hold in my ability to lie in a warm bed, eat a healthy meal daily, and access the technology necessary to continue my studies online. More importantly, I realised how privileged I am to be a healthy, living, breathing being. Instead of focusing my energy on my concerns about how I have been affected by the virus, I shifted my mindset to one of absolute gratitude. Gratitude for the country that has provided for me and made sure that its people have access to the vaccine, for the frontline workers risking their lives to help those in need, for the

opportunity to study at one of the top institutions in the country, and for my professors and tutors who have helped to ease us into this new method of education and allowed us to interact in such a way that I sometimes forget that we are not really in each other's presence. My heart often overflows with such joy at the realisation that, although life as we know it has changed quite completely, the new way of life is still filled with such wonder if we just change our perspectives.

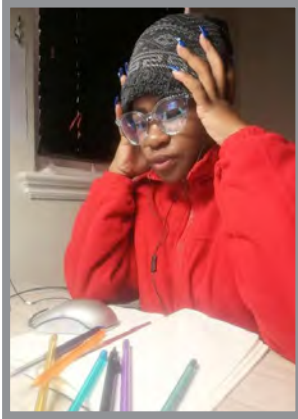
Many will agree that being stuck inside the confines of our houses feels like we're living out our lives as prisoners. But I have decided that this is not a prison sentence, but a new beginning. I have learnt that, through reading, studying, philosophising, and creating, the four walls of my bedroom can expand, and become the entire universe. This past year and a half have been one of the most trying periods of our lives, but there is hope, and we are just a few jabs away from finally being able to meet each other!



Photo: Thabo Malatji. Education is life to those who seek it.

A SHORT STORY “RECOLLECTING COVID-19 UNDER LOCK-DOWN”

Tebogo Mtetwa



Lockdown had a negative impact on me as a first-year student. Studying under lockdown restrictions has not been easy at all. As students we are all given an opportunity to apply at residences of our choice but not being accepted at the residence of your choice because the capacity of students that are allowed to be placed at residence has been reached is a big disappointment and it makes a student unsure of whether being at varsity is what they want or not.

I remember when I packed the little I had and came to residence. It was so hard that I had to ask for blankets from another lady because my father had no plan of getting as little as R500.00 as a result of the lockdown and I did not know that I had to buy food if my student card

has not been activated. I had no personal computer but fortunately there is a computer lab I could go to, to attend online classes and write tests.

Visitors were not allowed in our residences. This made it hard for me to cope because I was not even computer literate when I came to the residence but, if visiting was allowed, I would have gone to my friend for just one day to learn about a computer. All thanks to AIM now I know the basics of using a laptop and thanks to NSFAS for the computer I have today.

Every day it gets better, and I have adjusted to online learning. When I find it hard to understand something I just email my lecturer or ask other students their views. I cannot wait for Covid to fade, and I can go to campus and get lost at first or late for class while looking for the hall, meet students who are studying the same course as mine and give others hugs when they are feeling sad.



Photo: Kevyn Meyer. Empty parking.

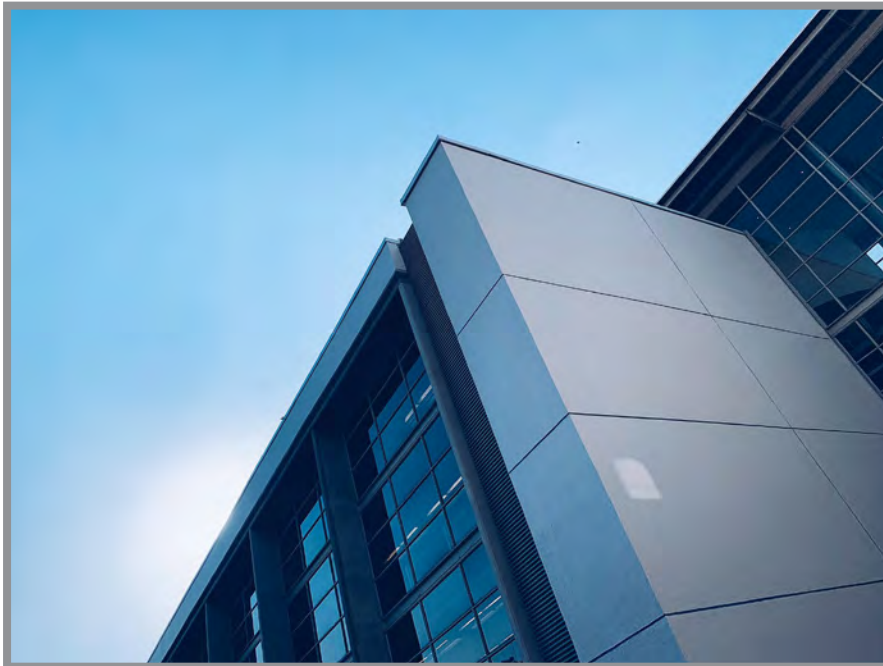


Photo: Takalani Mutavhatsindi. Law Building.



Photo: Khonzile Promise Mabena. This picture depicts life within the lockdown and adhering to the government rules of staying at home. Studying at the same time as the University initiated online learning (14 July 2020).

MY STORY

Boitumelo Moimana

The coronavirus came and it complicated life for many; dreams had to be put on hold. Life had to be reconstructed and reshaped for the future.

I had started a new journey during my first year 2020, a journey of self-discovery, a journey that had to help me beat my depression, a journey that was supposed to boost my self-confidence, a journey that would be glorified by the new education, a journey that was supposed to make me a new person in a new environment. But all of that was shattered in March 2020 when it was declared that the Coronavirus had stretched and therefore arrived on our doorsteps. Matters became worse when we were sent back home from universities; hope was slowly fading away and fear was building inside. Unfortunately, all that I had on my year plan list was completely shattered or rather destroyed because none of it had been achieved, instead I had to adapt to a new education that required a lot from me. The internet, the connectivity, the computer literacy had to be resolved and known by everyone in a short period of time. Staying in that two-roomed house required so much from me, from waking up early to make sure that I have a clean space to proceed with my online classes. I missed so much being face-to-face with the lecturers because after all it was my first time being taught by lecturers. The pain of studying without hope, the pain of dealing with work and battling with your hidden depressions, all of that brought by the virus. But as time goes on one had to adapt to all because honestly there was no time to cry, but time to cherish the moment and take some strength from the advantage of being able to use that computer, the advantage of being able to multitask. Fast-forward the year 2021, the virus is still shaking the world and we are still within, fighting to make it through no matter what. But I say I will survive; I will never give up and I will wear that graduation gown in record time. Regardless I will fly at UP because I believe I can fly!!

TIDES OF CHANGE

Anthyeny Warnick

Typhoons that wash away villages
It does so with an intention
It wipes away settlements
Yet allows for human ingenuity
It may not make sense now
Nor shall it ever

Tides of change are unstoppable
Rising oceans that obliterate cities
It does so with an intention
It highlights consequences
Yet allows for human adaption
It may not make sense now
Nor shall it ever

Tides of change are unstoppable
Thunderstorms that block sunlight
It does so with an intention
It forces momentary appreciation
Yet allows for human sympathy
It may not make sense now
Nor shall it ever

Tides of change are unstoppable
Tides come in many forms
In overtaking typhoons
In rising oceans
In lengthy thunderstorms

It may not make sense now
Nor shall it ever

Tides of change are unstoppable
Tides of change are rebellious
Tides of change are unyielding
Tides of change are unstoppable



Photo: Sean Mzwandile Siba.

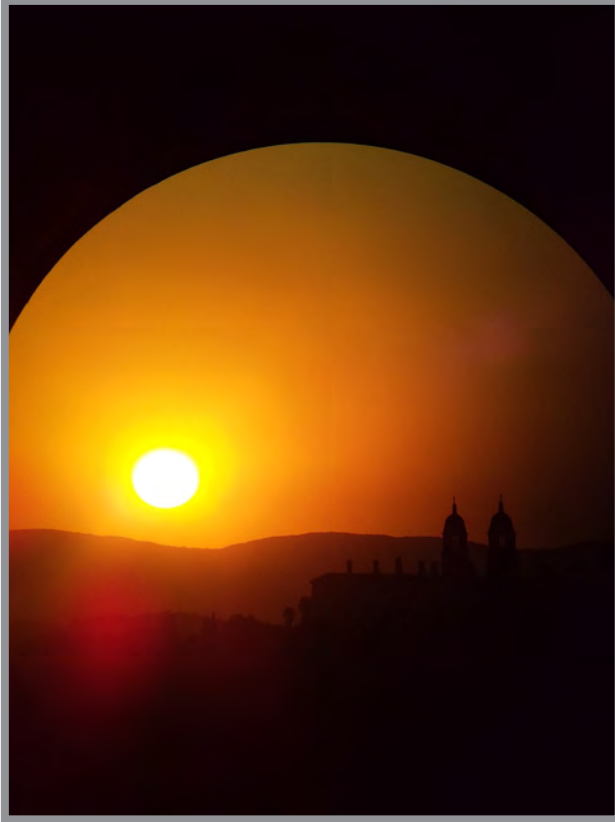


Photo: Ronny Jamu. Approaching sunset through my binoculars was captured using my android device (11 May 2020).

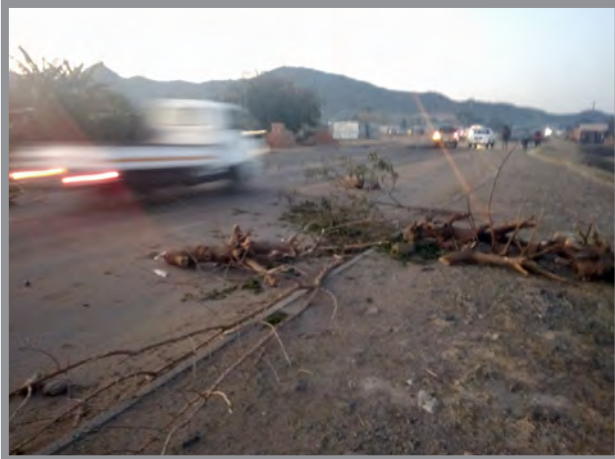


Photo: Boitshoko Mboweni. The forgotten people of Mmakau strike back: after months of being in lockdown and having regular power cuts, the villagers of Mmakau staged a protest for electricity. This image shows a barricaded road.

LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN

Thabo Nqola

Existence under quarantine; is more like Shakespeare's script of a blissful life with an aim to dine,

Isolation became a friend; with outmost respect we will never part ways,

Improvised learning birthed an overwhelming desire; contentedly depression was long waiting to partner with an older-feeling like aging wine,

Distilled from the finest act of financial absence; the taste of boredom-life became a Tree Sloth's tears,

Performing iteration to utterance and utterance to iteration; an insufficient cerebrum will not bear to handle a highly concentrated focused solution of uncommon knowledge known as knowledge-brine,

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Existence under quarantine; feels like losing tho' my semester report kinesilogically dances with wins,

My mirrors glued to my laptop; Outside (O₂) became an unknown frie'd,

I divorced social uttering; thereby married Boleyn and inherited her sins,

More like Gordon Ramsey and unlike the rest; I discovered a talent that creates recipes that interblend,

The act of specimen Shakespeare became stronger; thereby I invented the 'Complex Poetry' in order to create a legacy for the endured quarantines.

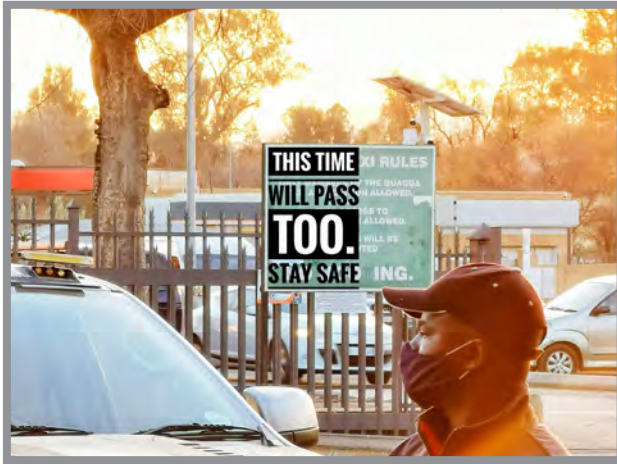


Photo: Saddam Hussain. This time will pass too.



Photo: Karyn Sitole. What I have been doing during the lockdown.

REST IN PEACE

Sibusiso Dhlamini

Rest in peace-the most used phrase

Ever since the beginning of time we've either heard or uttered the phrase

Never does a day go by without the most used phrase

'I love and I love you too' should be the most used phrase

'How did you sleep and sleep tight' is nowhere to be found as the most used phrase?

'Have a good day and how was your day' should, I think, be the most used phrase.

Even our beloved keyboards have frequented the phrase

Glued in our minds and tongues is the most used phrase

Are we not fatigued of the most used phrase?

Is the most used phrase a new normal? ...just like wearing masks, sanitizing and social distancing?

Rest in peace – the frequented phrase

Ngikujwayele kanjani ukududuza isonto emva kwesonto?

Sihambela siphi isifo njengoma zibakho uMsombuluko neSabatha nangal' iSonto?

Izolo besifihla ugogo kamngani, namhlanje sifihle unina kamfana, selingenile elithi k'sasa kuthunwa usis' Nomasonto.

'Alale ngokuthula' noma 'phephisani' ihambile insika yekhaya kufanele iduduze umndeni olahlekelwe ababili ngelilodw'...isonto

Sesiyasho phela ngoba kumele kodwa awehli kahle kimi ngivele ngizizwe ngiwumpehli wezenzo zange mpelasonto.

Impelasonto bekumele ngabe syaphumula kodwa kuphi la ngoba ukuthuna sekwaba yiwo umsebenzi wethu esiwenza nsuku zonke...nangalo isonto as

Kwalona leli elesikhombisa...isonto okwathiwa asomkhonza ngalo s'yasebenza.

Waze wanzima ukudlula owendoda exova idaka.

Kanti Umsebenzi onjani won' ongenazithukuthuku?

Mvelingqangi sisebenza ngoba bekhujwulwe nguwe...s'yazi.

Okungenani sesicela ukusebenza eziyithupha ngesonto

Rest in peace – the most used phrase

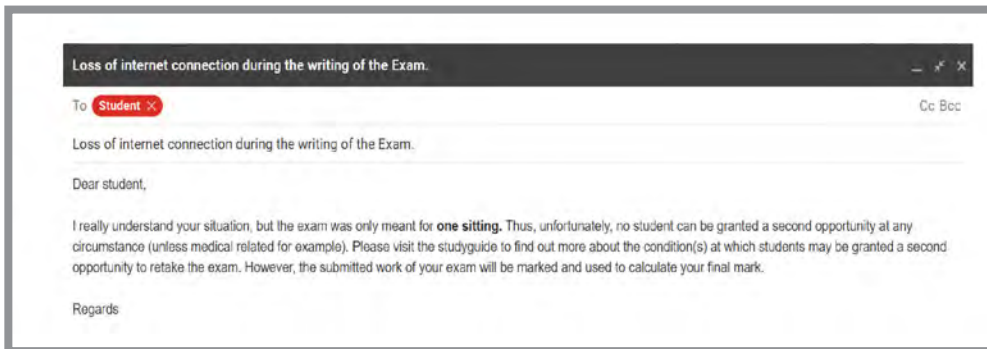
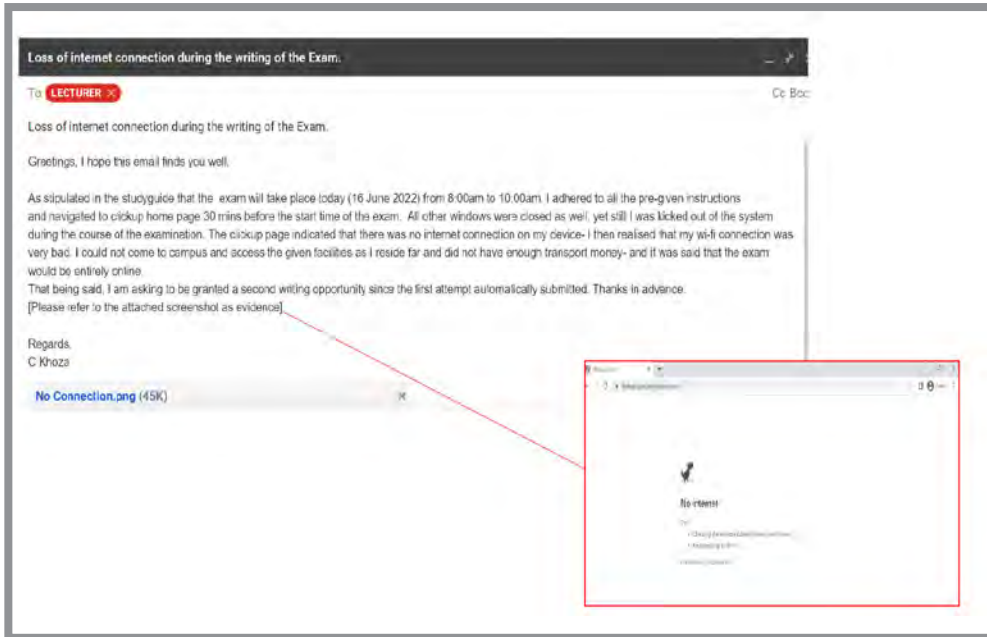


Photo: Cassius Khoza.

A TIME NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

Kezia La Vita

Silence...

The streets are barren, no longer giving birth to sounds of happy neighbours. Doors closed to homes, sealed with fear, apprehension and disbelief. People armed with masks and gloves.

The world had descended into lockdown. Covid being generous with rest, giving people the opportunity to take a breath while taking away other's ability to breathe – the precious moments most people created, born out of the tragedy most people experienced.

It was not until the year after the pandemic had started that she truly felt the pain the rest of the world had gone through. She had lived in a bubble. Finding inspiration in the kitchen. Simple ingredients like flour, sugar, yeast, water, eggs and a little bit of butter brought her joy. Who knew love was nurtured in the kitchen, created out of simple ingredients? Bread...Donuts...Beignets...Pretzels. This was her sanctuary, her bubble. If only she knew what lay ahead.

Her year started with her witnessing the people she loved lose someone. It was sudden. The virus did not give warning. No diagnosis was made until after. Covid-19 was the culprit. She witnessed the tears. Transcribed the pain. Heard the sobs of anguish. She did not know the victim but she loved the people who loved the victim. It was enough. Enough love to feel a fraction of the debilitating pain that haunted their faces. He was a brother, an uncle, a father. Gone in an instant.

This was depressingly only the start of a year that would not only stay with her for the rest of her life but also make her question everything. Months passed and she watched those she loved try to find the light in the murky water of life again.

It was not until a bullet tore through the flesh of a loved one that she truly understood loss. A crime committed. A crime yet to be understood. They were in the middle of a pandemic. People dying every single day. She questioned the motive of the killer. She did not understand. Not when Covid was already pulling the trigger on so many people. She forgot that life could be taken away more than one way. She forgot that people who could snuff out life still existed.

One week. Seven days.

One week was all it took to bury her loved one. In seven days, she translated her pain onto a piece of paper to be read at the funeral, stared the death certificate in the face and solidified another life lost on an insurance form. On the eighth day, she threw flower petals on a coffin filled

with the shell that once held a human so dear to her and her family. Once again, a brother, a father, a son, lost to death. Gone in the pulling of a trigger.

Flour...Sugar...Yeast...Water...Eggs...And a little bit of butter. Simple ingredients unlike the stages of grief. Denial. Anger. Bargaining. Depression. Acceptance. Slowly life crawled back to a semblance of normality. She learned to knead through the pain, to use memories as an ingredient while still questioning the recipe of life. Grief had become a dance partner of sorts, two stepping with her at every opportunity.

Life. Live. Die. Dead. Unassuming words. Words that failed to clearly pronounce the why, the how, the what. Perhaps only time would tell.

Soon she would be coming of age. Something to celebrate. A day when smiling would not only be necessary but be welcomed. Unfortunately, Covid had other plans. Half an hour before midnight, the beginning of her birthday, death came knocking on a familiar door.

The mother of a loved one had lost her ability to breathe. Another life lost. Only this time, the pain she saw on her loved one's face, broke her heart. She was now familiar with the pain of death. However, she did not dream of trying to understand the pain of her loved one. How could she? She was certainly familiar with the pain death delivered but she was not familiar with the pain of losing a parent. Covid had once again stolen someone from the world. A mother, a sister, a grandmother. A life so precious to those left behind.

Life. Live. Die. Dead. Unassuming words.

Flour, water, yeast, eggs and a little bit of butter, simple ingredients with the potential to be anything from bread to donuts. Could death or rather the loss of a loved one have the potential to be anything, anything she wanted it to be instead of just pain, longing and the inability to see life's meaning? Could she learn to go through life without the pain losing a loved one brought, but instead cherish the memories made, the lessons life taught and realise that life was precious despite the existence of executioners like Covid-19?

Only the continuing walk of time would tell.

MRS. ODETTA

Jan Ndlovu

In the following poem I call my neighbour with a nickname Odetta which I used to call her by because she looked like the American artist, the real Mrs. Odetta. In April 2020 when we had already gone home, we received the news that she had passed away; everything was a mess. In fact, everything during the beginning of the pandemic was a mess, and we gave our help to her family through the burial and pandemic.

Dear Mother, Odetta, for death always becomes a shock where it marks,
I feel we are in debt to death with every breath we breathe,
As if it is a daily bread for death, that's generation wealth
I couldn't accept that death was ahead of your health,
Your children cried and mourned, I wished I was deaf
I saw hope like a smoke of cigarette on air leaving your address,
I saw despair with strength standing up from your rocking chair entering your chicks' hearts
I could see in depth of their heart that they knew your duties are due
I don't understand death, it should take time from its affairs and be fair
This is a bet game of decks for him, shuffling with our souls
At least play chess, with love of patience and hate of haste, death
How do I declare sorry to poor chicks, who saw their mother being snatched by a hawk,
And left the chicks with nest and the world
I wish I was deaf, the laughter that sharpens teeth has bred desolation
The little nest seems hollow like a den with a cell,
The Sunday bell rang like a teasing heartbeat, men removed their hats from their heads
The preacher was aware of his words, *who would dare to say it was time?*
Last time I saw you we talked how life is like a cassette, I guess your tape has ended,
But had a long length yet felt short
I will see you soon in heaven
I pray God doesn't condemn your beautiful soul, amen



Photo: Petrus Pienaar.

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Photo: Sarah Coutlakis. Coronavirus Lockdown Loneliness Level 3. #Loneliness #Social_Distancing



Photo: Karyn Sithole. What I have been doing during the lockdown.

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Photo: Kendall Behr. Portrait of lockdown.



Photo: Elsabe Olivier. Dance classes via Zoom.

WHISPERS OF HOPE

Letsiwe Mabuza

Walking through empty streets
Trying to evade an invisible enemy
We are hugged by anxiety
While fear invades our today
Choking any intimation of a tomorrow

Fleeing from this truth
We step on elusive stones and sink into depression
Though too depressing to bear,
Still in hope we look forward to a tomorrow
We open our eyes and catch a glimpse of hope
Just a glimmer of hope it is,
Yet it is sufficient

Though we fall we rise
In the eye of the storm, still we glide
To the east we turn, to the west we turn
Only to be blinded by thick hopelessness
Yet we keep seeking, we keep knocking
For delicate soft whispers we still hear

Refusing to believe the report of the herald,
We turn to ourselves and in loud silence we look up
Then we hear the tremors of the whispers getting louder
Murmuring into our ears, into our spirits
Be still and discern, a new beginning is unfolding

A balanced newness is indeed upon us
A newness fervently hostile to greed and lovers of vice intentions
Spews scoundrels and crashes crafty eloquence to rubble
Raises the downtrodden and awards integrity,
Nature is beholden

The fog has been lifted and truth is presenting its case
The blind can see
The deaf can also hear the whispers
Whispers of hope they are
If we see tomorrow then we are alive, we are alive



Photo: Mhlanga Ni. Mask on.

RECOLLECTING COVID-19 – 365 DAYS UNDER LOCKDOWN

Ntombikayise Mahaye

Introduction

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. On the 16th of March 2020, the University of Pretoria Management announced that contact classes are suspended until mid-April 2020, and that residences will be closed during this period. This was an attempt to avoid or minimise the possible spread of the COVID-19 among staff and students. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students had to vacate the residence buildings within the next 48 to 72 hours.

Those who were unable to leave the residences due to reasons, which would be considered as very compelling, had to speak to their respective Head of Residences to seek permission to stay in residences. This was overwhelming as many students are international, and cannot arrange or afford travelling back home within 72 hours. Those who were able to travel vacated the residences, whereas those who were unable to travel had to apply for a permit to remain in residence. Students allowed to remain in residences were those with (i) international travel restrictions (in their home countries), and (ii) reasons relating to academic and research matters that require them to stay as their only option. In this regard, the Director and TuksRes Management had to look into a case-by-case situation, and justification was required from respective Faculties.

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COVID-19 pandemic and working from home

I was doing my first year as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow when the University of Pretoria gates were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This happened just after ordering chemicals, collecting samples and setting up the laboratory for experiments. After doing preliminary experiments, the laboratory was closed. While waiting for life to get back to normal, we opted to do work that can be done from home e.g., writing literature review types of papers and proposals for funding. During this time we held virtual meetings. Working from home was not as productive as working in the office. Having a 2-year-old daughter, it was challenging to fully focus throughout the meeting without

disturbances. Another challenge was the unstable network connection. Meeting attendee(s) would be disconnected, we then need to wait for the person to be connected again, then we can continue. Meetings would then take longer than scheduled due to network interruptions and/or disturbances by kids.

In June 2020, 50% of staff as well as postgraduates and undergraduate students involved in laboratory work were allowed to come back to campus subject to the supervisor's and the Head of Department's approval. In my department, there was a one week delay in the re-opening of the laboratory as the sanitizing companies had a tight schedule to sanitize all buildings. Furthermore, no students or staff were allowed to enter any building, if not sanitized (according to RSA command center). Students and staff could only enter the building a day after sanitizing.

Protective measures to minimise the spread of the Coronavirus were put in place. These included (i) monitoring/checking your temperature on arrival, (ii) health check - where you declare any COVID-19 symptoms you might have (e.g., feeling hot or cold, coughing, sore throat or pain when swallowing, breathlessness or difficulty breathing, changes in the ability to taste or smell, pre-existing medical conditions, and if you have been in contact with someone confirmed to be infected with COVID-19), (iii) washing hands with soap or sanitizing very often, (iv) keeping a distance of at least 1.5 m between yourself and the next person, (v) avoiding handshakes/hugs, (vi) avoiding touching your face, (vii) practising respiratory hygiene (e.g., cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing), (viii) wearing a mask at all times, and (ix) seeking medical care early.

I then applied for a permit to go back into the laboratory and it was approved. Based on our preliminary studies, we had to include more experimental endpoints for the manuscript to be of good quality and so that it could be published in a good high impact factor journal. We ordered kits, and chemicals for the outstanding experiments. However, we experienced further delays as suppliers could not deliver products because flights were not operating. After flights were resumed, there were still limited flights available to bring products from other countries to South Africa. We had to wait longer than normally expected for the products to be booked on a flight due to extraordinary circumstances unfortunately out of the suppliers' hands. When the kits and chemicals finally arrived after 3-4 months, it was already December. Every year the laboratory closes in December for Christmas holidays. In December 2020, the laboratory was closed earlier than usual due to a positive COVID-19 case reported in the department. Laboratories were re-opened in the second week of January 2021. This meant that no laboratory work was done from March 2020 until January 2021 due to delays in delivery of chemicals and laboratory closure. Under these

circumstances, I could not do all the work that I proposed to do during my 2-year Postdoctoral contract. Most of the work was done including work that was not on the proposal. One experiment on the proposal was cancelled as the contract was coming to an end, and it was not feasible to do in the few months of time remaining on the contract.

Conclusion

Overall, although not all outputs as per proposal were met, we did not let the COVID-19 pandemic control us. We managed to keep the research going by working on literature review papers and proposals to attract external funding. Suppliers worked hand in hand with us to make sure that they delivered products immediately after flights became available.



Photo: Mitch Williams. The Many Multiplicities of Me.

Spending most of lockdown working in a single room can get tedious but, by focusing on many different interests and aspects of myself every day, it can be made rewarding and exciting.



Photo: Sarah Coutlakis.

I don't see how anyone can be bored. The only problem is to try and find enough time - there is so much to learn, study and do - sometimes, like with this picture, you just have to look a little harder for those things. Make the most of your time in lockdown and let's remember that there is a war being fought by many others just outside our doors. Boredom cannot be a complaint during this time. #3CheersForDoctorsAndNurses! #Coronavirus_South_Africa #Coronavirus2020Pandemic

COVID-19: TWO SIDES TO THE STORY

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Abstract

Since the report of the first Covid-19 infected person in South Africa, Covid-19 has moved from being a distant threat to a new reality that resulted in a nationwide lockdown. Though the lockdown was necessary to prepare health facilities for when the country reached its peak, it had a significant negative impact on the economy. In other areas such as the environment, work and education, and the personal lives of South Africans, the consequences have been varied. This article will highlight the positive and negative impact of the past 18 months of lockdown from a South African perspective.

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Introduction

The novel coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was identified in China at the end of 2019 and was declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 30 January 2020. The widespread transmission of the virus to all countries across the globe resulted in it being declared a pandemic by the WHO on 11 March 2020¹. As of 1 September 2021, there have officially been 217 558 771 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 4 517 240 Covid-19 related deaths across the globe².

In South Africa, the first case of Covid-19 was reported on 5 March 2020 and early action was

1 Virtual Press Conference on COVID-19 – 11 March 2020.; 2020. https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/transcripts/who-audio-emergencies-coronavirus-press-conference-full-and-final-11mar2020.pdf?sfvrsn=cb432bb3_2.

2 Worldometers.info. Worldometers coronavirus. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>. Accessed June 1, 2020.

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taken when the government declared a national state of disaster on 15 March 2020³. A nationwide lockdown was enforced on 26 March 2020 and people were only allowed to leave their homes to purchase groceries, seek medical care, or provide essential services during this time. The lockdown was initially planned to last for three weeks but was later extended by an additional two weeks. The premise for the extension was that lifting the lockdown too quickly could lead to a rapid and uncontrollable spread of the virus that would overwhelm the healthcare system, leading to potentially higher mortality rates. On 23 April 2020 the President announced a gradual and phased exit from the lockdown. This involved the implementation of a risk adjusted strategy through which deliberate and cautious action was taken to ease the lockdown restrictions⁴. Presently, the country is in its third wave on an adjusted level 3 of lockdown, which allows most individuals to return to work on condition that workplaces adhere to various regulations. Individuals are encouraged to wash and sanitise hands frequently, wear masks when in public places and maintain social distancing. This is our new normal. While acknowledging that the lockdown was necessary, its negative impact on the economy has been unquestionably brutal. The environment, work and education sector, as well as the personal lives of many South Africans have been changed so dramatically, that a life pre-Covid-19 will likely remain a world we will never experience again.

Economy

The socio-economic consequences of the lockdown have severely impacted individuals and businesses in most sectors. The largest initial impacts were on mining, service sectors and non-essential industries, which indirectly impacted on all industries, including large and small businesses. Many large businesses were unable to trade at full capacity which resulted in decreased turnover. A significant percentage of companies had to either reduce working hours or lay off staff for a period⁵. An astonishing 42.7% of SMMEs had to close their doors during the first few months of lockdown

3 President Cyril Ramaphosa: Measures to combat Coronavirus COVID-19 epidemic. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/statement-president-cyril-ramaphosa-measures-combat-covid-19-epidemic-15-mar-2020-0000>.

4 President Cyril Ramaphosa: Measures to combat Coronavirus COVID-19 epidemic. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/statement-president-cyril-ramaphosa-measures-combat-covid-19-epidemic-15-mar-2020-0000>.

5 Statistics South Africa. Business Impact Survey of the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa.; 2020. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-00-80-01/Report-00-80-01April2020.pdf>.

due to debt, no access to relief funds and the inability to operate during lockdown to name a few reasons⁶. The unemployment rate in South Africa was 29.1% at the end of 2019 which increased to 30.1% during the first quarter of 2020 and increased further to 34.4% as a result of subsequent restrictions⁷. More than two million people to date have lost their jobs⁸ and the time it will take to recover these losses is nearly impossible to predict.

Several relief strategies have been put in place by government, which includes providing food parcels and a Covid-19 Social Relief or Distress grant of R350 for unemployed individuals⁹. Despite this effort from government, many individuals have either not received food parcels¹⁰ or do not qualify for the grant ¹¹.

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- 6 Statistics South Africa. Business Impact Survey of the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa.; 2020. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-00-80-01/Report-00-80-01April2020.pdf>; Lockdown forced nearly half of small businesses in South Africa to close: study. BusinessTech. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/455100/lockdown-forced-nearly-half-of-small-businesses-in-south-africa-to-close-study/>. Published December 7, 2020.
- 7 South Africa's unemployment rate hits record high. Aljazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/south-africa-unemployment-rate-hits-record-high-200623154110111.html>. Published June 23, 2020; South Africa's unemployment rate could hit 50%: report. BusinessTech. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/394654/south-africas-unemployment-rate-could-hit-50-report/>. Published 2020; SA's unemployment rate hits record 34.4%. News24. <https://www.news24.com/fin24/economy/sas-unemployment-rate-hits-record-344-20210824>. Published August 24, 2021.
- 8 Covid kills a decade of employment growth in SA. Mail & Guardian. <https://mg.co.za/business/2021-05-08-covid-kills-a-decade-of-employment-growth-in-sa/>. Published May 8, 2021.
- 9 President Cyril Ramaphosa: Additional Coronavirus COVID-19 economic and social relief measures. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa-additional-coronavirus-covid-19-economic-and-social-relief>.
- 10 Karrim A. PICS | Protest over food parcels erupts in Johannesburg. News24. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/pics-protest-over-food-parcels-erupts-in-johannesburg-20200428>. Published April 28, 2020; Pikoli Z. Hunger crisis: Getting food to the needy. Daily Maverick. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-05-14-hunger-crisis-getting-food-to-the-needy/#gsc.tab=0>. Published May 14, 2020.
- 11 Mvumvu Z. Tens of thousands who do not qualify apply for R350 unemployment grant. Sunday Times. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2020-05-11-tens-of-thousands-who-do-not-qualify-apply-for-r350-unemployment-grant/>. Published May 11, 2020; Evans J. Govt to pay R350 Covid-19 distress grant from mid-May: Here is who can apply. News24. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/govt-to-pay-r350-covid-19-distress-grant-from-mid-may-here-is-who-can-apply-20200429>. Published April 29, 2020.

This economic burn has highlighted the resourcefulness of South Africans. Election Xitsakiso Baloyi, a twenty-eight year old from Mankweng in Limpopo, has made a success of selling pizzas during lockdown as people were unable to eat at restaurants. Rabbit's Pizza, which started off as a one-man business now employs nine young individuals and future plans include opening new outlets in nearby areas and employing more individuals¹². New businesses have been established to meet the increasing demand in manufacturing personal protective equipment, face-masks, visors and face-shields¹³, since wearing face-masks is still compulsory in South Africa when in public¹⁴. Ponani Shikweni, a resident of Alexandra

township repurposed her linen manufacturing business and is producing over 1000 facial masks per day and employs over 30 young individuals under the age of 25. She has already distributed over 20 000 cloth masks free of charge to individuals in Alexandra¹⁵. People are doing what they must to survive but Covid-19 has highlighted vulnerabilities in the economic system that would need to be made more resilient to such risks in the upcoming months and years to ensure economic growth. Economists and epidemiologists are working together to devise Covid-19 responses to balance health and economy.

Environment

During this unprecedented time, it is important to be aware of some of the healing effects that this pandemic has had on the environment. Globally, lockdown restrictions led to an initial reduction in air pollution which is likely due to restricted movement as people are encouraged to work from

12 Jordaan N. President pleased youth have seized opportunity provided by Covid-19 pandemic to create own incomes. Times Live. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2020-07-20-president-pleased-youth-have-seized-opportunity-provided-by-covid-19-pandemic-to-create-own-incomes/>. Published July 20, 2020.

13 Jordaan N. President pleased youth have seized opportunity provided by Covid-19 pandemic to create own incomes. Times Live.

14 Not wearing a mask is now a criminal offence in South Africa: minister. BusinessTech. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/415971/not-wearing-a-mask-is-now-a-criminal-offence-in-south-africa-minister/>. Published July 14, 2020.

15 Jordaan N. President pleased youth have seized opportunity provided by Covid-19 pandemic to create own incomes. Times Live.

home¹⁶. As life started to resume, so did pollution; however the positive impact of reduced air pollution has resulted in renewed global efforts to improve air quality which will ultimately lead to improved health¹⁷.

Emotional, physiological and social well-being

In the northern hemisphere, most countries saw an increase in domestic violence as people spent more time at home with their abusers, and South Africa was not immune to this phenomenon. Since the country moved to lockdown, violence against women and children and violence in general have increased dramatically¹⁸. As alcohol is often the culprit in violent incidents, bans on alcohol have been persistently introduced during waves of infections to free-up hospital beds occupied by those suffering from alcohol-related trauma.

The lockdown period and enhanced restrictions during subsequent waves had opposing effects. Although it created a unique opportunity for families to spend quality time together, reuniting relationships with loved ones that may have been lost due to busy schedules, others have been increasingly isolated leading to mental health problems. Suicide prevention lines are on high alert during this time. The medical fraternity who witness the impact of the pandemic directly, are not spared either. What has come of this is the need to serve each other better and to allow for an

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16 Blue skies, reduced emissions only temporary, won't benefit environment in long run: Experts. The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/pollution/blue-skies-reduced-emissions-only-temporary-wont-benefit-environment-in-long-run-experts/articleshow/75061943.cms>. Published April 9, 2020.

17 Business for Clean Air: New initiative to help corporates tackle air pollution as lockdown lifts. Edie Newsroom. <https://www.edie.net/news/7/Business-for-Clean-Air--New-initiative-to-help-corporates-tackle-air-pollution-as-lockdown-lifts/>. Published June 24, 2020; City air pollution dropped by 28% in Bengaluru, India, during Covid-19 lockdown, new analysis reveals. Health and Environment Alliance. <https://www.env-health.org/city-air-pollution-dropped-by-28-in-bengaluru-during-covid-19-lockdown-new-analysis-reveals/>. Published June 22, 2020.

18 McCain N. "Surge" in gender-based violence during lockdown Level 3, says Ramaphosa. News24. <https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/surge-in-gender-based-voilence-during-lockdown-level-3-says-ramaphosa-20200613>. Published June 13, 2020; Big jump in murders in South Africa since the start of level 3 lockdown. BusinessTech. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/406325/big-jump-in-murders-in-south-africa-since-the-start-of-level-3-lockdown/>. Published June 10, 2020.

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improved work-life balance. It has also confirmed that human beings are social creatures who need interaction with one another in order for their mental and emotional health to be maintained. On the other end of the pandemic, we may have many broken hearts as a result of Covid-19-related losses, but with it hopefully also a world that is able to help repair those broken hearts, rather than compound their agony.

Work and education

Schools were closed during lockdown with gradual opening in early June 2020 and with multiple closures since. The closing of schools during lockdown was particularly difficult for parents performing essential services. Being thrust into home-schooling, many parents were ill-prepared and may have new-found respect for the teaching profession. Controversies over school fees were experienced as some schools reduced school fees while others remained the same. Importantly, children from poor communities who relied on school feeding schemes were the most severely affected, bringing lockdowns for children into disrepute, especially since the risk of death from Covid-19 in children stands at 0.001%. This was compounded by many parents losing their jobs and being unable to feed their children. This is likely to have contributed to the malnutrition that was observed in hospitals.

In better resourced schools and in institutions of higher learning, digitised education is now the norm. This digital era has extended to the employment industry where many companies have encouraged employees to work remotely over the past 18 months. Physical offices may therefore no longer be necessary. In future, we might see that geographical location might be considered less of an obstacle for companies when hiring talents. Numerous companies have already vacated office buildings which might be turned into residential complexes in future. This decreased need for buildings might result in a decline in larger investments.

Science and technology

As scientists at the Institute for Cellular and Molecular Medicine (ICMM), University of Pretoria, we were forced to halt experiments and sample collection during lockdown level 5. Our research group embraced technology using Zoom video conferencing and online meeting platforms to stay in touch. Students and staff at the ICMM are still mostly working remotely unless they are performing experiments. We have easily fallen in line with the government mandated mask-wearing while life

has returned to a new normal. Sample collections have resumed and we have had several in person meetings when Covid-19 numbers are at a low in the country. Working remotely has resulted in a culture where employees and students trust each other to do what is required and resulted in a more structured working environment relying on booking and calendars for most activities.

Despite the downsides of this pandemic for research across the country and globe, it has also led to new research opportunities, with thousands of publications on SARS-CoV-2 and Covid-19 that keep increasing as new information becomes available¹⁹. Global initiatives in science are currently ongoing to better understand the virus, how the body responds to it and in finding new ways to treat severe disease, either through existing or new drugs²⁰. Science and health communities came together during this time to work towards finding new ways to deal with a virus that is affecting everyone equally.

The first South African SARS-CoV-2 genome was sequenced in March 2020 in a collaborative effort between the South African National Bioinformatics Institute (SANBI) and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). Since then, many additional SARS-CoV-2 genomes have been sequenced by the Kwazulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform (KRISP)²¹. The sequencing of these genomes has shed light on the variants circulating in South Africa and whether current vaccines being rolled out remain effective against these variants. As the number of cases in South Africa increases with different rates of growth in different regions of the country, genomic information will provide scientists with a better understanding of the mutation and transmission rates of new variants.

South Africa participated in several Covid-19 vaccine trials and several vaccines have received

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- 19 COVID-19: Global literature on coronavirus disease. World Health Organization. <https://search.bvsalud.org/global-literature-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/>. Accessed July 2, 2020; NCBI SARS-CoV-2 Resources. National Centre for Biotechnology Information. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sars-cov-2/>. Accessed July 2, 2020.
- 20 Nextstrain: Genomic epidemiology of novel coronavirus. <https://nextstrain.org/ncov/global>. Published 2020. Accessed July 2, 2020; The COVID-19 Host Genetics Initiative. <https://www.covid19hg.org/>. Accessed July 2, 2020; WHO Launches Global Megatrial of the Four Most Promising Coronavirus Treatments. Trial Site News. <https://www.trialsitenews.com/who-launches-global-megatrial-of-the-four-most-promising-coronavirus-treatments/>. Published March 23, 2020; Ledford H. Coronavirus breakthrough: dexamethasone is first drug shown to save lives. *Nature*. 2020;582(7813):469-469. doi:10.1038/d41586-020-01824-5.
- 21 Giandhari J, Pillay S, Wilkinson E, et al. Early transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in South Africa: An epidemiological and phylogenetic report. *medRxiv Prepr Serv Heal Sci*. May 2020. doi:10.1101/2020.05.29.20116376.

emergency approval for use or full FDA approval to aid in curbing the spread of the virus. The J&J vaccine was the first vaccine to be rolled out in this country and Pfizer followed a few weeks later. At the end of August 2021, more than 12 million people in South Africa have received at least one vaccination²². Although there is still considerable vaccine hesitancy in South Africa, the hope is that we will be able to vaccinate enough people to reach population immunity to prevent future waves of infection.

Conclusion

Covid-19 was a distant threat that soon became a reality when the first case was reported in South Africa. Subsequently, a nationwide lockdown was implemented that resulted in confusion and uncertainty for many South Africans. As waves of infection have resulted in successive rounds of restrictions, government and citizens have needed to cooperatively take responsibility and work together to fight Covid-19 and the negative effects that this pandemic and lockdown have had on both the South African economy and individual lives. The negative impact that Covid-19 has had in South Africa is undeniable, however, 'every dark cloud has a silver lining', and several positives have also come from this. This pandemic has brought the world to its knees – but amidst the many negatives, we should also try and see the positives and hold onto these in the months to come.

22 COVID-19 South African Coronavirus News And Information. <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/latest-vaccine-statistics/>. Accessed August 30, 2021.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING MY HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

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Abstract

Since the report of the first Covid-19 infected person in South Africa, Covid-19 moved from being a distant threat to a new reality overnight. Metaphorically, Covid-19 could be described as rain, and in order to be protected one would need to stand under an umbrella. The fundamental question that stems from this is who is holding this protective umbrella? Is the government holding the umbrella or are we holding the umbrella? In this article/commentary/perspective, we briefly discuss the responsibility of the South African government and the individual during this global pandemic, the reasoning behind the implementation of lockdown and the consequences thereof. We conclude that both government and citizens need to cooperatively take responsibility and work together to fight Covid-19. The protective umbrella needs to be held by both government and by ourselves.

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Article

As 2019 came to an end, a new year was in sight bringing hope and new opportunities. Who could have predicted that 2020 would indeed lead to new opportunities, but on the backdrop of a highly disruptive and devastating global pandemic known as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19)? The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, China, at the end of 2019. Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-

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CoV-2) was confirmed as the causative agent. On 11 March 2020 the WHO declared Covid-19 to be a global pandemic¹. The origin of the virus remains to be confirmed, but it is believed to spread via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can remain on surfaces for extended periods and can be transferred to any person who encounters them. This year, 2020, has seen the world working together to fight a common enemy, Covid-19.

South Africa waited in anticipation following the report of the initial cases in China. Would South Africa's culturally and genetically diverse population be protected or spared from this pandemic? With the report of the first Covid-19 infected person in South Africa, Covid-19 moved from being a distant threat to a new reality overnight. Along with the uncertainties of how Covid-19 would impact South Africa, the question that immediately arose was "Who is responsible for protecting me as an individual and ensuring my health during this Covid-19 pandemic?"

Metaphorically, Covid-19 could be described as rain, and in order to be protected one would need to stand under an umbrella. The fundamental question that stems from this is, who is holding this protective umbrella? Is the government holding the umbrella or are we holding the umbrella? The WHO guidance document on pandemic influenza preparedness and response states that "While all sectors of society are involved in pandemic preparedness and response, the national government is the natural leader for responsible for liaising with (i) health sectors to provide critical epidemiological, clinical and laboratory information which can be utilised to inform the government and the public regarding measures required to reduce the spread of the virus, as well as to generate information/statistics regarding potential morbidity and mortality rates; (ii) non-health sectors to enable essential operations and services to be provided during the pandemic; (iii) civil society organisations who can assist with raising awareness regarding the pandemic, communicating accurate information to communities, and assist government to provide essential services to citizens; and (iv) families and individuals who play a role in reducing the spread of the virus through adopting measures outlined by the government such as covering coughs and sneezes, hand-washing, social distancing, voluntary isolation or quarantine of exposed and sick people². Table 1 conveys the responses of the authors to the question "Who is responsible for protecting my health during the Covid-19 pandemic?".

1 https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/transcripts/who-audio-emergencies-coronavirus-press-conference-full-and-final-11mar2020.pdf?sfvrsn=cb432bb3_2.

2 Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response: A WHO Guidance Document. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2009. 3, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK143067/>.

In a country such as South Africa, which has a large socioeconomic divide and which is culturally and genetically diverse, government must play an important role in taking responsibility for the health of its citizens. A lack of understanding regarding the spread and transmission of Covid-19, high levels of socialisation and ineffective social distancing have made it difficult for South Africa to allow individuals to be solely responsible for their own health during this pandemic. On 15 March 2020, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, addressed the nation on measures to combat Covid-19. In this address, he declared a national state of disaster in terms of the South African Disaster Management Act, informing the public of the commencement of a travel ban on foreign nationals from high-risk countries (Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and China), effective from 18 March 2020, and encouraged social distancing. He also called on all South Africans to minimise physical contact by using elbow greetings rather than shaking hands, prohibited gatherings of more than 100 people and announced the closing of schools effective from 18 March 2020. In his closing statement, the president noted that “This epidemic will pass. But it is up to us to determine how long it will last, how damaging it will be, and how long it will take our economy and our country to recover. It is true that we are facing a grave emergency. But if we act together, if we act now, and if we act decisively, we will overcome it”³.

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Good hygiene practices and social distancing alone are not enough to curb the spread of Covid-19. The concept of “flattening the curve”, i.e. slow down the spread of the virus, is an important approach, which has led to countries around the world initiating lockdown protocols whereby citizens are confined to their homes for a period of time, only being allowed to leave under certain conditions such as to purchase groceries, to seek medical help, or to provide essential services. This approach has not only assisted in limiting contact between people but has also provided governments with the time needed to expand healthcare capacity, and in so doing, has avoided health care systems from being overwhelmed. Although the curve has been flattened, it is likely that the “area under the curve”, i.e. the total number of people infected, might not be altered. Furthermore, lockdown provides time to prepare, equip and train healthcare workers to better manage Covid-19 patients. South Africa chose to follow this approach on 24 March 2020 when President Ramaphosa announced a 3-week nationwide lockdown with severe restrictions on travel

3 President Cyril Ramaphosa’s speeches during COVID -19 retrieved from, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa> and <https://sacoronavirus.co.za>. 15 March 2020: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/03/15/statement-by-president-cyril-ramaphosa-on-measures-to-combat-covid-19-epidemic/>

and movement effective from midnight 26 March 2020⁴. Many South Africans understood the reason for these drastic measures and applauded the President for choosing to put his citizens first. However, as the socioeconomic consequences of the lockdown began to impact on individuals and businesses, resistance began to mount from many sectors of society. Loss of jobs, closing of businesses and loss of income, to name a few, affected many families. It became and remains a balancing act between protecting the population and saving the economy. The government implemented several relief strategies to provide support to those who were affected by the lockdown through setting up a solidarity fund to support small business and by providing food parcels to the poor and the jobless, to name a few, but were these strategies enough? On 9 April 2020 the President announced an extension of the nation-wide lockdown for a further 2 weeks to allow the healthcare system more time to prepare for the expected increase of COVID-19 cases⁵. The premise was that lifting the lockdown too quickly could lead to a rapid and uncontrollable spread of the virus which would overwhelm the healthcare system, ultimately leading to poorer patient care and potentially higher mortality rates.

On 23 April 2020 the President announced a gradual and phased exit from the lockdown. This involves the implementation of a risk adjusted strategy through which deliberate and cautious action will be taken to ease the lockdown restrictions⁶. The challenge that now arises as we move forward from a nationwide lockdown is how to re-open the economy without putting the nation at risk of greater rates of infection. The phased approach comprises of five levels of lockdown with level 5 being the most stringent. South Africa moved from level 5 to level 4 on 1 May 2020 and to level 3 on 1 June 2020. Moving down the levels, decisions have had to be made as to which businesses can resume and to what extent, and this has been met with some resistance from civil society groups. It was clear from the onset that this would not be an easy undertaking, and that the economy would be affected no matter what strategy was implemented. The balance between protecting citizens and saving the economy remains a constant challenge. As the restrictions are progressively lifted, the responsibility to ensure one's own safety begins to shift more towards the individual. Putting

4 24 March 2020: <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/statement-president-cyril-ramaphosa-escalation-measures-combat-covid-19-epidemic%2C-union>

5 9 April 2020: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/04/09/message-by-president-cyril-ramaphosa-on-covid-19-pandemic-thursday-9-april-2020/> or <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/message-president-cyril-ramaphosa-covid-19-pandemic-0>

6 23 April 2020: <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/statement-president-cyril-ramaphosa-south-africa%27s-response-coronavirus-pandemic%2C-union-buildings%2C-tshwane>

aside concerns regarding the wisdom of some of the decisions taken by government, each individual needs to take personal responsibility. This includes responsibility for one's own safety and the safety of others by (i) keeping a distance of 1.5 m from other people; (ii) regular washing or sanitising of hands; (iii) regular cleaning of surfaces; (iv) wearing a cloth mask in public; and (v) avoiding crowded areas. It is also important to consider the vulnerable members of our communities (those over 60 years of age, people with chronic diseases, and others) and to take the necessary steps to protect them. Wearing a mask has been considered an act of altruism, since its efficacy in protecting the wearer is limited, but it does reduce spread from an infected person to an uninfected person. Responsibility also shifts from the government to the workplace as employees started to return to work. The workplace is responsible for protecting employees by (i) making arrangements for social distancing at work; (ii) providing sanitiser or facilities for handwashing; (iii) sanitising workplace surfaces regularly; (iv) screening employees daily for symptoms; and (v) ensuring that facilities are available for self-isolation or quarantine for suspected cases.

It can thus be concluded that both government and citizens need to cooperatively take responsibility and work together to fight Covid-19. The protective umbrella needs to be held by both government and by ourselves. We need to consider the words of President Ramaphosa from his speech of 24 May 2020: "Now, as we enter the next phase of our struggle against the coronavirus, it is once again your actions that will determine the fate of our nation. As individuals, as families, as communities, it is you who will determine whether we experience the devastation that so many other countries have suffered, or whether we can spare our people, our society and our economy from the worst effects of this pandemic"⁷.

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7 24 May 2020: <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/address-president-cyril-ramaphosa-south-africa%E2%80%99s-response-coronavirus-pandemic%2C-union-buildings%2C-tshwane-0>

Table 1. Opinions from scientists in response to the question “Who is responsible for protecting my health during the Covid-19 pandemic?”

<p>Opinion 1</p>	<p>I don't think the President is in any way favouring one socio-economic group over the other. If anything, I think he's doing what he can for the benefit of every South African. We must also bear in mind that most countries around the globe are feeling the economic impact of the virus and it is not unique to us as it is shown in the global financial markets.</p> <p>As a person who understands the social, political and economic dynamics of a township community, if we (township people) were to be hit by the virus, it will have an impact on most people; including those in the suburban areas and not forgetting the health care system. We need to remember that most of the working-class individuals (cleaners, gardeners, cashiers, factory workers, miners, etc) and even some of our essential workers live in the townships. In addition to that, the majority of these individuals use public transportation. If the majority of Soweto residents were to be infected by the virus and remain in quarantine, it does not only mean that the majority of Johannesburg businesses will be short-staffed but also that these said individuals could've carried the virus into the city had they not remained isolated. This could also negatively affect the economy so it's unfortunately a double-sided coin.</p>
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Opinion 2

In my opinion, it will depend on the society/country as well as the culture of the people. For example, in Sweden, the government did not call for a nationwide lockdown but made it the responsibility of each individual to take care of their health. In such a society where socialization is very low, the people are well educated and health conscious, as well as have respect for one another in public spaces, it will be easier to manage the spread of Covid-19 to a certain extent without a nationwide lockdown.

In the context of South Africa, with a mixture of different cultures and people of different socio-economic status, and with a majority of the population not being well educated, the government has a bigger role to play in taking responsibility for the health of its citizens through a nationwide lockdown. Not many people in our society understand the spread of the disease, socialization is also very high, social distancing and understanding of the impact on others is low, this makes it difficult to allow individuals to be responsible for their own health because it puts in danger the health of others especially the vulnerable population. Even those who can take great care and responsibility for their own health are still at risk because we all share common public spaces with those who do not care or have no knowledge of self-responsibility such as the shops, restaurants, parks etc.

Hence, the question of who is responsible for my health is very dependent on the society and should be country or community specific.

Opinion 3

There are no easy, straight-forward answers to the questions you have posted. Ultimately, we who are educated and informed need to take responsibility for our own health and the health of others we get in contact with. One cannot control the actions of others and therefore you need to take control of your own actions to safeguard your own health and safety. By taking control of your own actions you assist the government who ultimately also has a responsibility to ensure that all South Africans feel that they are cared for and are provided with the best chance to remain healthy. This is not an easy task as cultural preferences, living conditions and lack of infrastructure in many of the more vulnerable communities make the implementation of practices, such as social distancing very difficult and it is consequently almost impossible to contain the virus. In my opinion, lockdown is a way to restrict movement, which prevents or at least slows the spread of the virus outside of the “hot-spot” community pockets. It is well understood that the initial lockdown was to flatten-the-curve, assisting the health services to get ready.

In my opinion, the economy is going to be affected no matter what strategy is followed. Lifting lockdown too quickly might lead to a fast, uncontrollable spread of the virus. And just may lead to people feel very unsupported and even more vulnerable. And this despair might bring its own turmoil. The more people are infected the more people need to stay at home for two weeks to self-quarantine. An uncontrollable spread of the virus may lead to many more deaths; many of these deaths may be an individual that was the only breadwinner of the family, bringing grief and lack-of-income. I am not sure what the cultural take of many South Africans will be on such hardship. Covid-19 infections in large companies like mines will result in a significant amount of people that will need to self-quarantine. At least a slow lift of the lockdown will prepare companies to operate with many workers absent. So, there is no easy way to take on this.

I am glad I am not the one who needs to make these decisions. It is clear that this pandemic is emphasizing the socio-economic differences in our beautiful country. We that are privileged to live a relative luxury need to be careful not to be insensitive to fellow South Africans. We are all in this together.

Opinion 4

On the topic of who is responsible for taking care of my health, I think a distinction needs to be made. I personally think it is my responsibility to look after my health, however we are in a global pandemic and I think government does have a role in the general populace's health. Especially in the case of people who maybe don't understand why the health guidelines work. Epidemiology tells us that we are dealing with an infectious disease that will spread given the chance so try as I might to not get sick, I still rely on the choices of those I live with in order to remain healthy. In the topic of people's health vs the economy, the only perspective I can offer is my own personal one, and I know if I were to get sick because of someone else's choices, I would resent them. As mentioned earlier, I don't think the solutions of other countries like Sweden can really be applied here, but I think the most important thing is that whatever uniquely African solution comes out of this, it's important that there is buy-in from everyone. That way we know everyone is on the same page and working together so that we can act effectively and cohesively.

I think the way forward is that it is government's responsibility in part to help provide us with the tools and supportive legislation to allow us to take responsibility on an individual basis for our own health.

Opinion 5

I think the answer to that question ultimately lies with what the reality will be towards the end of this pandemic. When the world is open and moving, everyone will be responsible for their own health, as it's always been. In the long run it is the only enforceable strategy. Our country, unlike others, does not have the luxury nor the resources to maintain an extended or repeated lockdown, and it is already being forced to open up. As people begin to move around, Covid-19 infections will certainly pop up. It cannot be avoided, and across the globe as many countries only begin to ease their own restrictions, they have already reported a surge in new cases. Until we have a vaccine or standardised treatment, Covid-19 cannot be avoided. How long will any country be able to continue such strategies? In the case of South Africa, not for long - so I believe it is the Government's job to educate and empower its citizens with accurate, transparent data and information to the best of their ability, to equip our healthcare professionals with everything they might need in surplus, and then to let the citizens of South Africa go back to their lives. Because it is the citizen's responsibility to then use that knowledge to take care of themselves and their loved ones. In the end, even during a lockdown, I can only be responsible for myself and the ones I love. Furthermore, people will only maintain their behaviour if it is done willingly and to that end, I think educating the populace will go a long way. Fear and threats inspire rebellion and uprising. Only compromise and trust can yield compliance.

PAGE (OV1D I9 BREAK

Katleo Makhanya

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Multiple dots with all the mental strength that I once had; the blank pages of all traumatic stages of losses experienced around me before the three dots starting to be bigger and bolder; even though they are few, progress is better as new people are found, new positive characteristics developed; new opportunities and the light is even brighter at the end of the tunnel than before the nearly half decade pandemic. I present Page (ov1d I9 Break as open interpretation for any viewer who comes across it. Look and think; you can relate.



Photo: Renate Zipfel. Pause.

COVID-19

Thembele Dyosiba

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2. This virus was first identified in December 2019 in China. It reached South Africa during the early months of 2020 and caused a lot of destruction to the country. The following essay will discuss the challenges I faced during this pandemic and how I overcame them.

In the year of 2020, I was doing my matric. I had so much excitement to be doing my final year at high school and could not wait to finally experience all the things that people who have done matric talk about. The time of being a matriculant finally arrived but because of the unpredicted events such as Covid-19, I managed to enjoy only the first semester. Covid-19 broke out here in South Africa with a drastic change. This caused a pause in everything. It was announced that we must remain indoors to minimize the spread of it as it was spreading very fast. This caused a lot of frustration; I was stressed about what might happen in the country. I had so many unanswered questions, like, will we ever be able to go back to school? how would I pass with good marks if we must remain indoors? As time went by it seemed as if Covid-19 will be with us for the longest time. Therefore, I snapped out of the stressed zone and thought about my future and whether I will let Covid-19 make my dreams fade away or fight for my life desires. I only lived with hope as it seemed impossible that everything would go back to normal.

With such thoughts in my mind, I took the three months of staying at home as an opportunity to work hard on my studies. I had study sessions with my friends which was not allowed, but one had to break some rules somewhere in order to reach my goal of passing Grade 12 and going to study further at university. When it was time to return to in-contact classes, it was difficult for us matriculants. I had so much fear, wondering if it is safe yet to have in-contact classes. We were under a lot of pressure as there was so much work to catch up and there was a short period before we would write exams. There was never a weekend or a day to catch a breath for us. However, all these traumatic experiences resulted in good achievements. Because of hard work, I occupied the Top Achiever position at my school with four distinctions in IsiXhosa, Life Orientation, Business Studies, and History. I could never be prouder of myself. This gave me hope that the country could beat this if I managed to pass my grade with good marks under the circumstances.

The limitations that were passed, especially related to staying at home full-time with all the

family members, were also a bit overwhelming. It was more of a suffocating experience because I was used to get to have time with myself prior to the breakout of the pandemic. Even though there were good achievements during the pandemic (mentioned in the above paragraph) there were devastating moments. I have this brother of mine that never took Covid-19 seriously therefore he would go out and hang out with different people. As a result, he brought Covid-19 home. We were all infected and had to undergo 14 days of isolation. Unfortunately, my grandmother could not make it. I have never been so devastated in my whole life as the moment I learned that she was gone and I will never see her nor laugh with her again. I struggled to come to terms with the fact that my shoulder to cry on is gone. Each day I would subconsciously hope that she will come back but days went by and I realized that this is the end. The way she was buried because of the restrictions still torments me to this day and this led to me taking a gap year to deal with the trauma. It was really a tough time for me but I soldiered on.

A year passed by, we are now in the year of 2022. The life of being a student at the University of Pretoria began. In the first weeks of the academic year, it was communicated that campus will be closed due to the Covid-19 regulations and classes would take place online as Covid-19 was still with us. This news literally left me shattered. I was extremely worried and wondered how I will survive, especially with using a computer because I have never used one before. Classes started and I still had not received funding so I struggled to buy data so that I could attend classes and if ever I did have data, sometimes I would struggle to join classes because of network problems. All this happened during the period of stage 4 of loadshedding. At times I would not be able to write a test. The worst challenge I encountered is being all by myself trying to make sense of how everything works, for instance finding out where to view lectures, making a timetable by myself, and accessing the required reading that I must read. I believed that had we been on campus everything would have been better; but Covid-19 prevented that from happening.

Time went by and I reminded myself of the things I have endured and that I still prospered. This gave me the strength and knowledge that I can survive and prosper in anything as long as I set my mind to it. I pushed through the first semester and passed all my modules. Covid-19 brought a lot of suffering, but it also made me a strong and courageous woman.

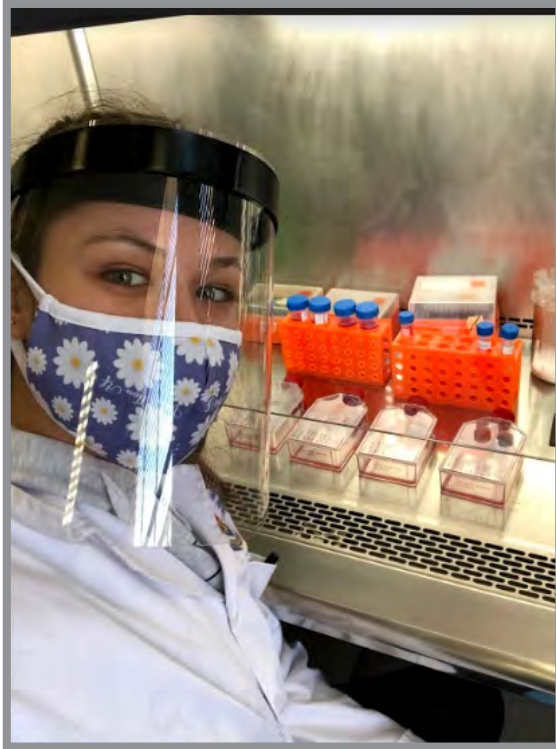


Photo: Jamie Mollentze. Me and my Mesenchymal Stem Cells (MSCs) practising social distancing. #MyMastersWillContinue #UPStaySafe.



Photo: T. Chagwiza

COVID-19

Lesedi Ramogohlo Matabane

And suddenly, we're all prisoners in our own homes
Ooh well prisoners of the mighty killer lord Corona
The lord that caused nothing but pain
The lord that took our right to freedom of movement
The lord that was able to make everyone surrender

Thanks to the Covid-19 precautions army
The army that was able to defeat lord Covid-19
Thanks to soldier Social Distance
Thanks to soldier Masks
Thanks to soldier Sanitizer
Thanks to soldier Vaccine



Photo: Nico Botes. Masked laundry.

Siyabonga Kumalo

The fact that it came out of nowhere amazes all of us, but the question is: was there anyone who knew about it before? The “Virus” which is now mutated into a disease genetically distinct from a main strain, but not sufficiently different to be termed a distinct strain.

We all lost loved ones during this pandemic which led to a massive worldwide lockdown. Not only losing the people we love, but also the government lost control over the pandemic which caused a huge breakdown in the economy of the world. Humans were losing jobs. Entrepreneurs were not making any profit.

The lockdown caused by this massive pandemic did not only result in an economic breakdown but also a pause around the whole world. We had restrictions to follow such as: staying indoors, not going to malls or to work; schools were closed it was a miserable shutdown for everyone in the world.

It started as a 21 day lockdown, which gave all of us hope that everything will get back to normal. But the shutdown was extended to June which made us understand though it was sad. June came and nothing changed; everything still paused. More souls were taken away from the physical world. People started to lose hope and in the process of losing hope they started doing things such as looting shops and malls.

The pandemic has been better this year. We still have hope that things will get back to normal.



Photo: Michelle Carter.

GREY SCALE MEMORIES

Lynne Davies

I barely remember it all. The day the world turned into shades of grey. There wasn't a fade into the world of black and white, it was more like a snap; the world paused – as though it were a picture taken from a black and white camera – silent, dark. My father hugged me, holding back the tears as he relayed the information to us. His lips parted as he spoke.

'He was speaking right? Who was he talking to? Me? My brother? Himself? What was he saying?'

I got out of my bed and walked out of my room; it was now stained by that memory, by him telling us. The world had lost its vibrancy; it lost its life just like the ones it embedded into its surface. I sat down against the stone pond, staring out into the vast shades of grey. Her car sat there, vacant, unused. I waited and waited, there was no passage of time, no temperature, no sound. I felt the splashes of tears hitting my skin.

'Why was I crying? She was going to get out of the car, right? She was still here.'

Arms wrapped around me, held me tight and didn't let go, as they helped me to my feet and guided me back into the house. They helped me back into the tainted room and into bed. There was no warmth, in the house, the room, the bedding. No warmth from the hands that stroked my hair before darkness consumed me.

'Where did the warmth go? I wasn't cold. Would the world be normal again in the morning?'

Everything blurred – *'What day was it again?'* – there was something happening, no school, no going out, no distractions – *'Distractions? Why did I need distractions?'* We were trapped in that house, tainted, isolated, alone with each other, the four of us – *'or was it three?'* – it all remained grey, lifeless. There was no time, no day or night, no mornings, afternoons and evenings. The world had paused – *'Or did it just move incredibly slow?'*

I remember lying in bed – *'Or was I at my computer?'* – I spoke with people day-in-and-day-out. My father would sit with me some days, my brother would try make jokes on others, I would try to read on occasion – *'But I couldn't see the words'* – I felt like I stared at the world from the other side of the photograph, for the person taking the picture there was light, colour, life. I tried to avoid my room – *'The couch was uncomfortable'* – that was where the world felt the most still, quiet, like the photographs of crime scenes – *'Except there was no crime, no evidence...it was just a room, right?'* –

That room, my bedroom. The curtains remain drawn for eternity, the lights off permanently, the

door forever ajar. Some days I could barely cross the threshold into that room. I tried to avoid it, baking, cooking, crochet, art, reading, playing with the cat, gaming, watching TV, sleeping on the couch, making tea, embroidery, cutting my brother's hair – *'Did I really do that much? But it had only been a day.... right...?'*

I remember entering it sometimes, to change, grab something, or to go to bed. I didn't want to, because she was there – *'Was she? Why did I not want to see her?'* – I could hear her laughing, see her smiling, feel her holding me, hear her talking to me – *'She wasn't real'* – I could remember her hugging me, like everything would be alright. She was there, with me. She hadn't left us alone, in the house that she had made our home, and nothing was in shades of grey – *'Those were just old memories'* – but when I left that room – *'When I woke up the next day'* – it was grey again. There was no warmth, no colour, no light, no sound, no life. The world was black and white – *'It all reset...'* – She wasn't there anymore. She disappeared again – *'She died again'* – and the cycle continued. The room would shift from colourful to monochrome in the blink of an eye – *'Did that really happen?'*

Cooking, gaming, crochet, playing with the cat, talking to people over calls, embroidery, reading, watching TV – *'It just keeps repeating in different sequences. How long did it go on for?'* No matter how long I remained in the photograph – *'how long I strayed away from my dreams'* – she was always there when I got back. We would talk for hours about how my brother and father were doing stuff we didn't understand, watch YouTube videos until we fell asleep or scroll through Netflix to find a cooking show – *'but that was the past... right? She wasn't there. I was talking to myself, watching what we used to watch alone. Right...?'* – then my dad would walk in, he wouldn't look at you, he wouldn't smile, and his eyes wouldn't light up with love for you – *'Why didn't he look at you?'* He would just sit, and hug me, and tell me it would all be okay – *'Why did he say that?'* In those moments with you, I was warm – *'I was crying'*, then he would tell me you loved me, that you would always love me, and it was okay to feel like this – *'Feel like what?'* – and like that, you were gone again. The world was grey, and it was just my father and I again – *'Where did you go?'*

I remember when we could leave again. When I saw my friends, they hugged me, despite the rules not to touch. They asked if I was okay, how I was coping – *'Coping? With what?'* – my father dropped me off that morning in your car – *'Were you still not feeling well? Is that why you stayed at home?'* – I can't remember what I told them. They were all grey, everything was still grey – *'Was it because you were no longer with me?'* – the day blurred again – *'How long had it been?'* Everyone was walking on eggshells around me; people had hugged me and apologized – *'Why did they apologize?'* – my teacher had given me a card, she said my class had signed it – *'What did it say again?'* Then, I was back home. My brother had picked me up. He tried to make jokes, speak with me, check on

me – *‘Check on me? Was I hurt? Did I just not feel it?’* – and when the night came, I heard it again, my father crying for you. I checked on him, but you weren’t there – *‘Why weren’t you there for him?’*.

He hugged me and called me the nickname only you called me, and that’s when I felt it. The warmth, for the first time since the world turned grey. I felt warm, but it wasn’t comfortable, it was filled with grief, pain and hurt. *‘It still hurts to think of that name’*. Because I would never hear it from you ever again. I’d never see you again. You were gone, and the world lost its colour along with you.



Photo: Keryn Nicole Taylor. Hiding Behind the Things I Love.

When someone asks me, “who are you?” my go-to answer is a nature-lover, sunset-chaser, star-watcher and an interminably positive human being. Even though these aspects are extremely important to me, I find myself hiding behind them, and only allowing certain individuals to see the real me, the raw me. This image captures the me that I portray to the world, but also reminds me of the raw and real person that I am.

THE SILENT SCOURGE OF ONLINE LEARNING

Brittany Clarke & Duncan Lotter

From the onset of the devastating Covid-19 pandemic, studies across secondary and tertiary educational institutions were forced online. We thus entered a platform of education that was by and large unfamiliar to both educators and students. The quality of this new online alternative would always be measured against the familiarity of in-person education. It did and does not measure up to the standard of education experienced in person. As such, a significant amount of damage was and has been done to the quality of education.

Having never encountered a mass online migration like that of March 2020, educational institutions were trying their hardest to navigate uncharted waters with the long-term impacts of online teaching also unknown. Two and a half years into the pandemic and we can say that education is in a state of crisis. Students and educators alike soon realised that online education posed a number of challenges that reached epidemic levels. Online teaching is education's plague.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty skyrocketed while comprehension levels sunk. Students were unable to grasp the basics of the course content. This was evident in assignments and tests where students wrote either very superficially about the content, attempted to find shortcuts or completely missed the mark altogether. A major issue worth noting is that students displayed general confusion surrounding basic referencing styles, paragraphs and writing structure.

Despite the challenges that online learning posed, all attempts at helping the students were made. Online discussion boards were set up where students could ask general questions where lecturers and tutors would respond; "how to" tabs were set up on ClickUp which included an array of documents with step-by-step guidance, and specific email addresses were created for each tutor so that students could directly consult with their tutor; the offer of one-on-one online consultations was even extended to students. Still, the longer education stayed online, the more the standards of education dropped.

Not only did online teaching and learning create a disconnect from the course itself but it also led to students being disconnected from fellow students and lecturers. The impact that people have on others' learning was severely underestimated. The university experience is meant to be more than just the qualification that one obtains at the end of students' respective academic journeys. Self-discovery is also an important aspect of the university experience, one in which an individual could

make decisions that could have repercussions for their future. Being on campus and interacting with fellow students and lecturers are important elements in these choices that are made. Forming friendships and lecture friends within the university space is also vital for students' understanding. Such friendships create a relaxed environment where ideas can be shared freely without the pressure of knowledge being formally tested. Lecturers and tutors also play an incredible role in shaping students' understanding. We cannot downplay the importance of in-person lectures and tutorials.

After two years of tutorials being taught online, it is evident that there is a stark difference between live Blackboard sessions and sitting in tutorial venues in person. For two years tutors and lecturers sat at home speaking to black screens with the deafening silence of muted student microphones. In an online setting, students were reluctant to speak or ask questions, if they were even actually in attendance. Often it was noted that students would sign into online sessions and have it on in the background while focusing on other tasks.

Hushed giggles and smiling faces were replaced by a silent black hole that is the Internet. After just one week of being back on campus, it is crystal clear that in-person teaching is irreplaceable. Students are more interactive and willing to talk. It certainly appears that these students have been yearning for these in-person classes and tutorials. They are engaging more with the content, lecturers and tutors, and one another.

Simply put, the pandemic created an impersonal learning space and online teaching is not a viable, long-term, and sustainable option.

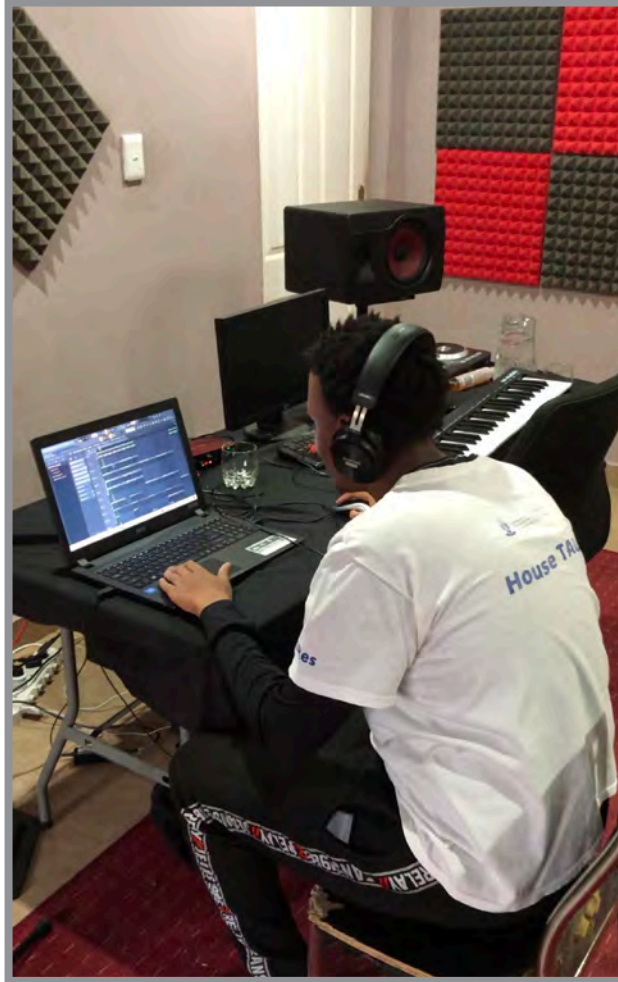


Photo: Tirole Seoko. Using the time to create.

REGAINING OUR NORMAL LIVES AFTER COVID-19

Nkateko Marholeni

In the past three years darkness came to strike the whole world, including South Africa. No one expected this horror. In this essay I will be looking at these three words: loss, pause and hope.

All of us have been affected by Covid-19 directly and indirectly. Some have lost their loved ones while some have lost their confidence due to Covid-19. I personally lost hope of interacting with friends. In the past I did not have the first experiences of being a student at the University of Pretoria due to the lockdown which forced the university to be stricter. It was hard when the seniors were telling me about their first experiences at the University of Pretoria.

All of us paused. It is one of the devastating things that everyone was force to do. The new normal was to take place. It was difficult to pause with our normal routines. We used to hug our friends and shake hands with them. I personally found that to pause is one of the things that I was most unfamiliar with. This is because, for example, as a blind student it was more difficult to maintain social distance. In most cases people will guide me wherever I want to go. But the part was most devastating was when a member of the security personnel came and told us to maintain social distancing. It was difficult to resist as we felt threatened. What I mean is that if we did not listen, we were told that we would be reported to the university. My friend and I could not even say to him that is difficult to maintain social distancing. The time of being with others was also much more limited. There was no chance to attend contact classes due to the number of people that must be in a venue.

In life we must have hope that one day everything will go back to normal. As a student I had hope that life will go back to normal. When the national government started to relax some of its restrictions, I started to believe that we are going back to real normality. It was a huge emotional relief to me. I started to feel more real as the social distance was removed. Here at the University of Pretoria I was delighted as they also removed some of their restrictions. By doing so made it made it possible to spend more time with friends. An unlimited number of people in a venue made it possible to see new faces that I have been waiting and wishing to see. On the other side students regained confidence that one day they will see each other face to face. By late June of 2022 all restrictions were lifted. Normality was ringing in our minds. We started to rejoice because the darkness that was disturbing us is now defeated.

I would like to conclude by saying it is easy to experience but it will take time to get hope. As the University of Pretoria staff and students we must be proud of ourselves as we have managed to encourage each other during tough times. Lastly, loss will be with us temporarily and hope is recoverable.

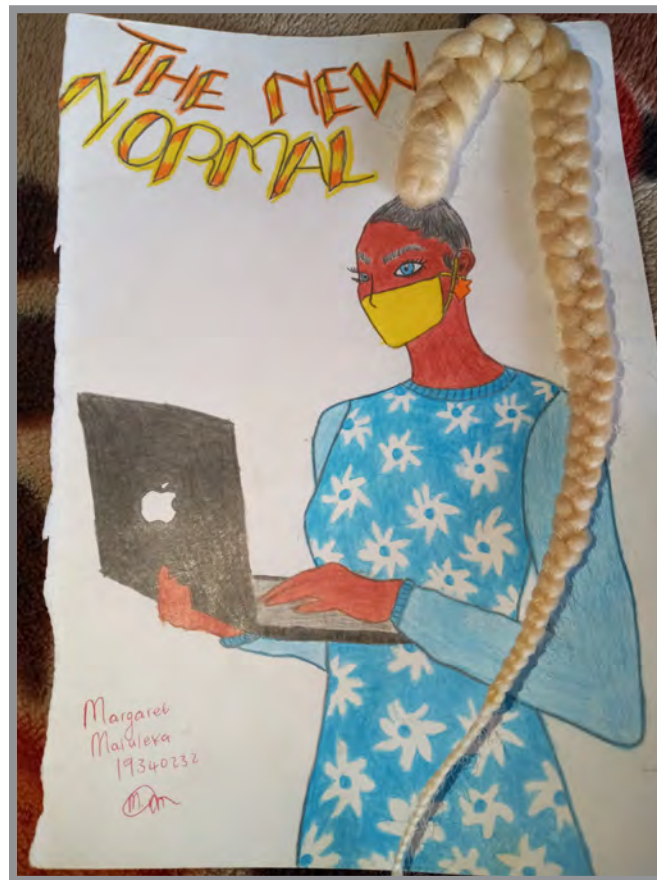


Photo: Margaret Maluleka. The new normal.



Photo: Margaret Maluleka. Virtual learning.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks must first of all go to all those who contributed entries to the three competitions run by the UP Archives. We are very grateful to have been able to add your voices and perspectives to the record of this unique time in the history of the globe, our country and the University of Pretoria. Thank you for taking the time to put your thoughts on paper, to pen your poems and to submit your photographs and art! These have all certainly enriched the archival record.

For the inspiration and momentum behind each of these competitions, special thanks go to University Archivist Professor Karen Harris. Her energy and ideas were at the foundation of each successive competition and she also enthusiastically encouraged classes of students to contribute their memories and impressions to the Archives through this endeavour.

We are also very grateful to the Registrar Professor Caroline Nicholson for supporting the project, especially for the financial contribution of the prizes for each year and for supporting the compilation of this publication. This project was also funded with the assistance of the Mellon Foundation's grant *Engaging the Archive and Counter-Archive*. Special acknowledgment must be given to Heather Thuynsma of the ESI Press for her support and practical assistance with the producing of this publication.

Acknowledgement must also be given to the whole staff of the UP Archives who each contributed to the success of the competitions and the project as a whole. This included the publicity related to the competitions, the receiving and processing of entries, adjudication, communication with entrants and winners, and ultimately the archiving of the contributions as part of the UP Archives collection on the Covid-19 pandemic. For these roles and their commitment to the project as a whole, many thanks to Dr Ria van der Merwe, Ms Alida Green, Ms Sian Pretorius-Nel, Ms Tiffany Morolong and in particular Dr Bronwyn Strydom.



This publication is a compilation of some of the submissions to the three UP Archives Covid-19 competitions which ran from 2020 to 2022, reflecting in a variety of formats the impact which the pandemic had on the community of the University of Pretoria.

It has been a real privilege to have been able to work on this collection and create this publication from the contributions made to the UP Archives. I have appreciated the grit, perseverance and humour of the UP community, as well as the honest sharing of loss and bewilderment in the various entries. The writing and photographs offer many windows into the experiences of so many who make up this community.

The original calls for submission to the various competitions have also been included as an introduction to the written and visual contributions. The written submissions from 2021 and 2022 have been arranged roughly chronologically, interpolated with photographs from the original 2020 competition. While some attention has been given to smoothing over grammatical gremlins, the pieces have been largely left as they were entered into the UPA Covid-19 competition. This is to preserve the voice, style and context of those who wrote for future generations.

I am very grateful to have been able to compile this record of the human experience of the Covid-19 pandemic at the University of Pretoria. These pages reflect not only personal loss, suffering and loneliness, but also remarkable perseverance, endurance and optimism in the face of isolation, restriction and both physical and emotional challenges.

Bronwyn Strydom
UP Assistant Archivist



Photo: Thule Mlandu.

ARCHIVES OF COVID-19

UP Recollections and Reflections

NON-FICTION

ISBN 9780639768649



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