**COVID-19**

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March 13, 2020, was the last day that I got to be a senior in high school. It was the last day that life was somewhat normal. I went to school, I did my homework, I got dinner with my friends, and I overall had no substantial worries. However, then we got the call that we would not be going back for two weeks. Panic arose in our country and our family as I began to ask the questions “will I go back to school?”, “what about my parents’ jobs?” and “how long is it going to be like this”. We were told to stay inside and to cancel all of our plans for the school year. Not to come back to school. Not to have our last game, our last class, or our senior prom. Then they told us not to have graduation. They said it was too dangerous and that we would be putting others at risk. As a student, it was a constant battle of emotion: wanting to be considerate of what was at stake, but selfishly remembering this was what we had been working towards for the majority of our lives. We had no closure. No last day, no goodbyes, and no ceremony in front of our parents commemorating our hard work. But they told us it was okay because we got an “extended summer”. What they did not realize is that we did not ask for an extended summer, we asked to graduate.

After coming to terms with the way the last decade of my life ended, it was time for a new chapter: college. Packing up and moving in was the only thing that I was looking forward to. Meeting my roommate, making new friends, and finally getting some normalcy back. Even though I knew it would look different because it was all online and because we had to cover our faces everywhere we went, I was okay, because at least I was moving forward. But then, just as the dust started to settle, that was ripped away too. “Go back home, it is too risky here” is what they told us as they sent us away with little notice and little compassion.

So, what does it mean to be a senior in high school and a freshman in college during a global pandemic? It means getting comfortable with it not going your way. It means being guinea pigs for how to handle the next graduating class and the next round of freshmen. It means losing things you earned and being told to deal with it. It means starting a whole new life behind the wall of a computer screen because that is the only way we can experience college. This may sound dramatic to some, but to those, I ask the question: what time in your life were you the freest? Most of your answers will likely be “in college”, and with that, I remind you, that during the time where we are supposed to be experiencing life and exploring the world before we settle down, we are trapped in the solitary prisons of quarantine without a key to get out.