**COVID-19**

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COVID-19 is truly something I would’ve never thought I would experience. If im being honest, I feel like I can write a book over what I experienced during COVID-19. One of the biggest effects COVID-19 had on me, was my well-being. I often find myself lost as I simply don’t know what to do. The sad part, the majority of my peers all are experiencing the ever so much tenacity of this pandemic.

Being that East Carolina University and the majority of other colleges and universities throughout the world are experiencing this sudden transition in learning as a result of COVID-19, is one that saddens me dearly. From my experience, being in college during an ongoing pandemic is just simply terrible. I’ve lost experiences that I am unable to attain. My 1st year at college got cut short because of a pandemic, it’s just something that I still am unable to wrap my head around. I’m a visual learner, one that must be in class to fully grasp the information that is being thrown at me and with the school system being transitioned to online learning, really hit hard for me, to the point where I kept doubting myself and my ability to push forward.

Being that I’m pre-dental, my classes have proved to be rigorous. The majority of my classes have labs, proving one of the most difficult challenges I have had to face in any academic year. Professors have shown to compile an extensive workload during this troubling time, which I see as unjust behavior. Just because we are doing school from home does not equal extra work to be completed. The majority of students still have jobs to tend to, personal lives and future experiences to be upheld, and mental health to maintain. I truly believe COVID-19 would be more bearable had it not been for select professors that have truly made learning more difficult. To be fair, there are many professors who fight to alter this reputation that a lot of professors have gained during this COVID-19 pandemic.

I believe another difficult challenge I have during COVID-19 is proper time management. Being that I have six rigorous classes each semester, I find it hard to make time for myself, an important part of upkeeping self-care. Being in a family business during a pandemic is not a joking matter. During the time of the initial lockdown in mid-March of 2020, I found myself having to work extensively in order to keep our business afloat. My family owns a small local restaurant here in Greenville North Carolina, called Bateeni Mediterranean Grill. At the start of the lockdown, we experienced the biggest trial as we were mostly an indoor dining restaurant. Once the dine-in section was closed off due to the government mandate, we saw a significant dip in sales. Our waiting staff had a very little source of income as a result, since most of their earnings are from tips. Labor wages is the most expensive part of running a restaurant and we did not want to lay off any employees as so many other restaurants were. Being so, my family and I had to work extensively, 60-70 hour work weeks and making very little money in an effort to keep the business and its employees afloat. Thankfully with the help of advertising and the support of our community, we were able to maintain steady business, enough so in fact that we now have another sister location restaurant called Yaba Mediterranean, which we opened mid-June, around the ongoing pandemic. Many of our close friends and family advise to not open another restaurant, as times were already troubling. Nonetheless, upon opening Yaba, our two business our now exceeding expectations.

Early January, I have taken over the Yaba restaurant and have been putting countless hours to upkeep the business. Being a college student with the already intensive workload from online education while owning and maintain his own restaurant at 19 years old is something that has proved to be the most challenging aspect of my life. However, I see these challenges as the fuel that keeps me going. I have learned so much experience form COVID-19 whether it be business related, school related, or time management, I feel as this is an experience for which I will greatly benefit from in the future. The work-ethic that I have gained during the pandemic is more valuable to me than any piece of paper, whether it be money or a diploma.

Everything in this world is temporary, including life. I believe that COVID-19 is a trial from God, in which our choices affect us in the long run. I have cut off many aspects of my life whether it be friends, bad habits, and many more as I did not see that I have one life to live, and I was only going to surround myself by things or people that will uplift me in life instead of dragging me down. I’ve lost people this past year as many others have as well. I cannot stress this enough as to how temporary this life is. Make what you can of it and do good and constantly better yourself and others, for it may be all gone in an instant and you look back and regret what could’ve been.