

WEST. CIVIL.: SINCE 1500 HI-102-N

Professor Kelly Marino/Primary Source Reflection 1



Bullied by COVID's Isolation

When I was taking Intro to Ethics with one of my favorite professors, Mr. Brian Stiltner. We were required to answer a question; "what is the meaning of life". My response was that it is still being explored; however, I have since come to realize that the meaning of life will always be an endless exploration that parallels the different experiences one has in their own lifetime. Each experience has its own "meaning". I have been faced with a collection of adversity on too many occasions to count and all of the memories of adversity have caused me pain and sadness in different ways; add to that list, being bullied by COVID. Nevertheless, the pain and sadness I have experienced through that collection of adversity has generated new meaning enabling me to push through some times of great difficulty.

In November I had been diagnosed with COVID and had to quarantine. I left my temporary dorm at the Marriott to move home into the basement. I didn't think it would be that bad, home cooked meals were left at my door, I had a tv and some video games but after a while it became lonely. There was no one around because they were quarantining as well. After quarantine was complete it was necessary for me to be back on campus for modified wrestling practices. So, in early December I packed up my things to move into Merton Hall on the fifth floor. One of the pieces of my college experience that I most enjoyed was that there was always an open door and people

scattered about, a smile, friendly warm welcome and I was never alone; I miss those days terribly. Arriving on campus this time, things proved to be much different. The campus was a ghost town, the only thing missing were tumbleweeds. The dining halls were closed, no shuttle service, I had no personal vehicle of my own and a feeling of being trapped began to overwhelm me. Even the inviting red adirondack chairs that adorned the lawns on move in day were stacked away in piles.

I pulled up to Merton with my mom and as we approached the doors to go in I felt a lump in my throat. We exited the elevator and I approached the end of the long empty corridor, passing paint buckets and tools along the way. My arms were full so I used my foot to slowly open the door to my dorm room. Mysteriously, the door jam was stuffed with paper so it would not lock from the outside when the room was not occupied. The room was small and narrow, almost claustrophobic, no room to pace or stretch my legs. My shoulders dropped and with tremendous frustration I threw my belongings on top of the plastic mattress and began to cry.

I felt deflated; when I opened that door like a magical portal I was whisked back into a moment in time when I was bullied relentlessly, a place where I felt broken, helpless, alone and could not take one more minute of that piece of my story. I was eight years old when I ran from the bullies daily on the bus and that feeling jumped right back into my bones as I stood in my room. How could I survive in this room all alone, no one around the isolation was like quicksand and I felt like I was sinking.

I looked down at the floor wondering why my shoes were sticking to it and I spotted an old Juul cartridge, I irritably kicked it out into the hallway, dark sticky syrup and hair covered the inside of the fridge, and I found my missing tumbleweeds; of hair in

the corners of my room. I tried to push my window open for some fresh air but it wouldn't budge. I was alone again, isolated on a big empty floor, in a big empty building. No one was allowed in and you couldn't visit anyone outside of your building which confused me as I had already had COVID and quarantine so I was not a health risk. Isolation is a dark lonely place where boredom and depression melt into one.

The mind serves many instinctive aspects, some memories impact one more than others. I hope that as someone in the future reads this they can find comfort in knowing that as you grow it is important to feel and experience many different events which will serve its purpose for you in life's journey. There will always be some test, challenge or hurdle that one must overcome I suppose. As I looked back reflecting on my eight year old self and the way I felt I came to realize that I made it through that difficult period of my life. It was debilitating, nonetheless; through the adversity, pain and sadness that I have endured, I found the courage and strength to face being bullied by COVID's isolation.