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Diary by CSUSB Student Jasmin Echeverria (10-18-2020)

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COVID-19 has brought many changes, not only to my life but I am sure that every single human on this has been affected in one way or another. My life has always been simple but busy, it consists of working part-time, school in the afternoon and evening and church at night. Since COVID hit, many the simple things I used to do disappeared. Our CSUSB campus closed and although I commuted an hour there and an hour back, I enjoyed the time I had for myself, I enjoyed attending class lectures, being in the physical campus. I would use the library, printer, and many other resources that the university offers but due to COVID many of those resources became unavailable or everything was online. I honestly dislike doing everything online. Another thing that changed was my spiritual life, I would attend church three times a week and when COVID started it went down to once a week and then all the services were being done through Facebook live. The churches were closed when everything shut down and or me church a very important of my life and it made me sad that I couldn’t attend, church to me is my place of refuge, my literal and metaphorical sanctuary so when the church had to close, it affected me. I work at a preschool and I still worked in the classroom during the beginning of the Pandemic, but it was remote for most of the week and I would attend my job site about once a week. This was
from March- June, but then in August we returned to a classroom, with no students, everything through zoom. Some of the positive change that occurred were that my family and myself became closer, I would spend more time with my siblings and still do. We would cook together and watch movies and such. I reopen my box of hobbies, I started to paint and write again, decorating my room and reorganizing my home. I tried exercising from home as well, failed most of the time but I tried. Many changes occurred due to COVID and many changes are still occurring.

Distance learning, ugh, I can honestly say NOT MY CUP OF TEA. Distance learning has been rough. During the “normal” school year, I already did not enjoy taking online courses because I prefer being in a classroom setting, learning hands-on. So far, it has been a struggle, I do not really feel motivated to do schoolwork, everything is so mixed and there really is not a set schedule. This semester, most of my classes are asynchronous so we aren’t required to attend a zoom meeting therefore I can do my work whenever I want BUT not only are we not in class now we don’t have a professor physically lecturing. I feel like we are having to teach ourselves, yes, we have the professors providing the material, but we must learn everything by reading. Most teachers provide PowerPoints or prerecorded lectures and I am thankful for them but completely different from learning in a classroom setting. Of course, I understand the need to distance learn but it has been very stressful to say the least. One of the things that worries me and this is not anything to do with me personally, is that many students, at any age level do not have all the resources that the need to learn
through distance learning. By this I mean that not everyone has Wi-Fi, not everyone has laptops, iPad, or desktops, most of these things were considered luxuries and now they are a necessity in order to have an education. I know that there are many resources that schools provide such as hotspots and borrowed laptops, but I am sure that not every child has access to get one. There is also the lack of technological knowledge, a lot of parents of students have never used a laptop, let alone emails, clever and/or zoom. There is also the language barrier for many families and lastly there are some parents who do not have time to be helping their children with schoolwork and during this pandemic parents, teachers and students all need to be in sync to successfully gain an education.

I work at a preschool for the Palm Springs Unified School District and we are doing distance learning. We currently have ten children enrolled which is far less than other years. We typically have 24 in the AM class and 24 in the PM class. The drop in numbers is understandable and preschool is not mandatory, so I feel that overall, it makes sense. Most of the staff is working from the classroom, we each have our own desk, more than six feet apart and we wear our mask as well. Honestly, my job is very simple and sometimes dull; I miss having children in the classroom and hearing their laughter and feeling their hugs. Children bring a lot of joy into the world and although we get to see them through zoom, it is not the same.

Since we now use Zoom for the University and I also use it at work, I do not want to say that I am an expert, but I’d say close to an expert. At work I have my laptop connected to Zoom and an iPad on the side which I use to take notes
and observations of the kiddos. During the zoom meeting with our students, we are the hosts so we learned to mute, turn off cameras, send private messages to parents, share screens, teach kids how to annotate on the zoom white board, and many more things. Without these two devices I would not be able to do my job. Before the pandemic, there really was not a need for me to be constantly checking my work email but now I must check it daily or even several times a day. We also use google sheets and google docs to share documents between staff members, we used to physically write everything on paper but now it is all online.

Never in a million years would I have ever imagined that this is what the year 2020 would look like. I would tell my friends and still tell them; I cannot believe that we are living through this, I am in awe of the times we are living in. Speaking of friends, one of things I am very thankful for during this pandemic are phones and Facetime. Although, I was not able to and choose not to visit my friends for some time, I still needed and need my friends for emotional support, motivation, love and just to gossip; so I am thankful that cellphone exist so I can connect with them on was or another, either by text, facetime, and social media. What a time to be alive. I am thankful that we have made it this far, but I am also so sorry for all of those who have lost loved ones. I pray that we are able to see this through.