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12-4-2020

## "Living in a Pandemic in 2020 (Archive Project)"

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### Recommended Citation

Ochoa, Valeria, ""Living in a Pandemic in 2020 (Archive Project)"" (2020). *Documenting the CSUSB COVID-19 Experience*. 178.

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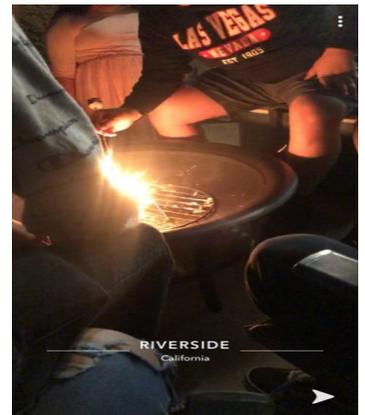
## Living in a Pandemic in 2020

By Valeria Ochoa

It's December 31st, 2019. Minutes away from starting the new year. The adults are gathered around the dining room table talking and laughing, while my cousins and I are sitting in the living room blowing on the party horns and laughing. We keep checking our phones and watches excitedly to see them strike 12, as if something big is going to happen. Well, something big was going to happen later on, we just did not know it.



The first three months of 2020 were good, I guess you could say. We celebrated my mom's birthday in January. He had a party and invited all of our close family and friends. I'm glad we did, because that was the last time we saw most of those people, before things got crazy. Next, we celebrated my dad's birthday in early march, also before things got crazy. Not a lot of people came, only my cousins who live really close by. This picture on the right is on my dad's birthday, we made a bonfire. Five days later was when they announced the closure of schools and the start of quarantine. I was in school on friday March 13th, when they announced that we were going to be quarantined for two weeks. Everyone, including me, went home that day excited that we were going to have a long break. We said to each other "see you after spring break" and "Oh my God i can't believe we actually got a three week break". We didn't know that that was the last time we were going to see each other, in person at least.



Between that last day in school and the end of the year I missed a lot. By 'missed a lot' I mean that I didn't get to experience a lot of things I was really looking forward to.

I missed my 18th birthday. This one was a big one for me, because I never thought I was going to make it to be 18. Well, I did make it, but I didn't get to celebrate like I wanted. My family and I went to one of my favorite places ever, the beach. We also drove around Hollywood, which was cool because I had never been to before. I don't necessarily enjoy celebrating my birthday. I do not know the reason why, I just know that it makes me sad.



My graduation was supposed to be on May 27th, but ended up getting cancelled. All we got was a virtual graduation. The way this worked, was that we had to submit a picture of us in our cap and gown. We also had to include a video of ourselves moving the tassel in our cap to the other side. The "ceremony" was kind of lame, to be honest. I think that we deserved more, but due to the circumstances that was all that could be done. It was really hard on me when they told us it was going to be cancelled. I wanted to celebrate it with my friends, take pictures with them and my teachers, and say a final goodbye.



We missed out on celebrating my grandfather's birthday all together. This one may not seem like a big one, but for my family, it is very important to us, and very special, to celebrate as a family. We basically use any event, as small as a birthday or a holiday that we may not necessarily celebrate where we con from, to get together and celebrate.

Now, my grandpa is the oldest of the whole family right now, so we try to spend as much time with him as we can. His birthday is on June 11th, so we couldn't go visit him for their own safety, and ours too. This picture on the right is from June 11th, 2019. It was one of my cousin's sixth grade promotions and we went down to San Diego to see it in person. My grandparents live in Mexico, across the border, so they stayed over there. When it was over, we crossed over and surprised them, they thought only my aunt who lives in San Diego was going over.



This pandemic did not only affect me, but it had a great effect on my mom. Like any person, she adores her parents. Honestly, sometimes I worry that she loves them more than me and my brother. Most of the things she does revolve around them, and she tries so hard to see them as often as she can. This pandemic prevented her from doing this, so she suffered a lot in that way. She called them everyday to check in, but with the pandemic not letting us meet up, talk in person and all that, they started using video chat and talk at least twice a day now. My whole family and I have a group chat, and they video chat through there a lot too.



I chose not to go to my cousin Michelle's 15th birthday party, and I wish I could have gone really bad. This was in August, and I was really scared because a family friend had passed away a few days before from covid. We didn't have contact with him, but since I have asthma and my dad too, I was scared something would happen. My other cousin Frida went, and I'm glad that she had someone to spend the night with. I really wanted to go and see them, but decided not to risk it. Me and Michelle would



see each other everyday in school, so it was hard when we went from seeing each other everyday, and texting all day to jst texting. We started facetime with her other most days of the week at the beginning, but it was hard to make time when we started school. Now, we see each other more often, but not too often. We facetime for at least 2 hours every time. Everytime we facetime, we laugh so much and we talk about how much we miss each other.



One of the hardest parts of this was not being able to see my friends too. They helped me be happy and I am so thankful to have them. The last time I saw them was March 13th, the last day of school. It was the day that they told us we were going to have a long break, but ended up being the last day of school. I didn't see them for eight months and that really sucked. We decided that it was time to see each other so we started planning a day to go to the park, play games, and eat. Of course, we all kept our masks on, for our own protection and our families. I was so happy to see them and it really helped.

This pandemic had a really big effect on everyone. Everyone had a different reaction, for some it caused depression, anxiety, it caused them to worry more about money, jobs, school, etc. It prevented people from seeing their families, friends, and significant others. The thing that I hate the most is that those people who got infected, when they were quarantining alone in their houses, the hospitals or wherever they were, the ones that passed away, they were all alone. That is not something anyone deserves, especially if you got infected with something that has no cure at the moment, while trying to provide for your family. I think that people need to take responsibility and action against COVID-19 and start thinking about others and what they're

doing to the community, they need to be cautious and make sure that they are staying protected. If we don't do this, this will never end.