

# Women's Perspectives

A Journal of Writing and Art by Adult Learners



*Caroline Wang, "Alyssa"*

**WOMEN IN THE TIME OF COVID**

Issue 16    2021

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## ***Women's Perspectives #16***

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### **WE LEARN Mission, Vision and Values**

#### **Mission Statement**

**WE LEARN is a community promoting women's literacy as a tool that fosters empowerment and equity for women.**

#### **Vision**

**WE LEARN seeks to build a just society and healthy communities. Therefore, we focus on education, specifically the basic literacies women need to gain access to systems of power and to achieve personal and community empowerment. Women's pursuit of multiple literacies gives visibility to our experiences as women, sustains our on-going desire to learn, encourages critical thinking, and provides the support and information necessary for reflection, understanding, and action to change our current situations.**

**WE LEARN engages a diverse membership community of adult basic education and literacy learners and alumni, educators, researchers and professional women, community activists and anyone dedicated to moving our mission forward.**

**WE LEARN members hold these values inwardly reflective of our networking organization and outwardly active to the communities we reach.**

#### **Values**

- I. WE LEARN is Women-Centered / Women-Positive**
- II. WE LEARN Supports Social Change**
- III. WE LEARN Works towards Justice & Equity**
- IV. WE LEARN Acts through Participatory Practices**

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### **Book Design**

Layout and design by Stacie Evans, WE LEARN Board.

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# Women's Perspectives #16

## A Journal of Writing and Art by Adult Learners

2021

### Women in the Time of Covid

*Women in the Time of Covid (Women's Perspectives Issue 16)* showcases original writing and artwork by adult literacy, basic education, and English language students across all levels. Student writers and artists were encouraged to reflect and to share ideas on the theme. Possible writing prompts were provided, and learners were encouraged to write about whatever aspect of the topic resonated with them. Prompts provided:

- *Write about a person/project/problem that the Covid-19 crisis has made you feel differently about.*
- *Write about the last thing you remember doing before you had to “shelter in place.”*
- *What have you learned for yourself about what keeps you healthy?*
- *Write a poem about a shared joy or happiness you experienced (perhaps unexpectedly).*
- *Write a thank-you note to someone who has done something that has been helpful to you during this time.*

Through personal stories, poems, and other forms of writing and art, students addressed such issues as overcoming obstacles, personal strength, returning to school, gratitude, dealing with fears and unknowns, and setting and achieving goals. The writings show strength, courage, love, kindness, respect and many other attributes. We hope this collection of writing will encourage and inspire all students. These writings illustrate the power of supporting women's literacy.

WE LEARN  
[welearnwomen@gmail.com](mailto:welearnwomen@gmail.com)  
<http://www.welearnwomen.org>  
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WE LEARN received writings from students across the United States and from Trinidad. They represented a range of topics and writing ability. This issue features 53 writings and ten pieces of art. The selection committee chose work they felt best represented the theme. They also considered voice, clarity, heart, and writing technique. In reproducing the work for publication, we have corrected typing and spelling errors, but have maintained the writers' original wording even in cases of non-standard sentence construction.

### **2021 Selection Committee**

Geraldine Cannon Becker, Maine

Leah Clay Youmans, New York

Marie Doerner, California

Stacie Evans, New York

Erik Jacobson, New Jersey

Jaye Jones, New York

Priyanka Sharma, Massachusetts

Joshua Stark, New York

Shellie Walters, Washington

You can purchase printed copies of this journal by contacting

WE LEARN: [wp@welearnwomen.org](mailto:wp@welearnwomen.org).

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WE LEARN publishes original student work in *Women's Perspectives*.  
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## ***Thank You***

to the participating programs that encouraged their students to send writings

<b>San Diego Continuing Education – ECC</b>	San Diego California
<b>South Brunswick Public Library</b>	Monmouth, New Jersey
<b>Lehman College Adult Learning Center</b>	Bronx, New York
<b>Pleasanton Library Literacy Program</b>	Pleasanton, California
<b>York College Learning Center</b>	Queens, New York
<b>Make the Road New Jersey</b>	Elizabeth, New Jersey
<b>Baylor Women’s Correctional Institution</b>	New Castle, Delaware
<b>Adult Literacy Tutors Association</b>	Belmont, Trinidad

### **A Note about Some Terms**

For readers who are not in the literacy field, here are explanation for some acronyms that are commonly used in literacy programs.

**ABE** – Adult Basic Education

**GED** – General Education Development

**HSE** – High School Equivalency

**ESL** – English as a Second Language

**ESOL** – English for Speakers of Other Languages

### **A Note about Authors’ Names**

Some writers have chosen to publish using only their first name, only their last name, or only their initials. Others have chosen not to publish their names at all.

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**Note from the WE LEARN  
Board of Directors and Advisory Committee**

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our lives and our world. It has spread around the world like a wildfire, leaving loss, fear, devastation, and uncertainty in its wake. Some countries seem to have unlocked the secrets of beating the pandemic, while others have suffered and continue to suffer terrible losses.

We wanted to acknowledge the pain and fear and struggle so many in our communities are dealing with. Many among us have lost family members and friends, lost jobs and homes, lost the comfort of physical contact with others. The past 15 months have been full of harsh lessons, and the pandemic isn't yet over.

Our hearts are with all of you – with your children, your parents, your coworkers, your neighbors. We hope that you have been able to be as safe as possible during the pandemic and hope that you are continuing to find the energy and will to keep pushing toward your goals. We come from many communities – of learners, of workers, of houses of worship, of cities and towns – and it is the strength of our communities that will help us get through this challenging time.

We wish you all the best and send you our love. We hope you find pleasure, comfort, and familiar experiences in the work included in this issue of *Women's Perspectives*.

Yours in family, community, and productive struggle,  
WE LEARN

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## INTRODUCTION

### Thoughts from Board Member Shellie Walters

*Shellie Walters has been on the WE LEARN Board of Directors since 2010. She is a student leader and was chair of the 2013 Women's Perspectives Committee. When the 2012 committee was developing issue #7, Shellie outlined some very important points for student writers to consider. These ideas made a great introduction to issue #7. We think they make a great introduction to any issue of Women's Perspectives, so we have continued to share them in each issue since 2012.*

As students, we often put ourselves down. We don't think we can do anything. We put ourselves down just because we can't read or write well or can't do math, and maybe we don't have a very good education or had bad experiences in school. We didn't think we could be good or useful until we had a good education.

But what were we doing with what we DID have before we came into a literacy program?

For example, my verbal skills were very good, but I didn't have written skills. I could hide my poor writing skills because I have great verbal skills. I could cover other things because of that, too.

Women who have poor reading and writing skills have lots of other skills, though they might not recognize them as important.

Many women were successful in work or their family or their community, but they were not recognized as successful because of a lack they had in another area.

So, when we come back to school, we're seen as lacking. We celebrate our school successes AFTER we come back, but we forget that we were also productive before!

We have always found ways to make things work in our lives. We have skills in everyday survival beyond what reading can teach us, but we forget we have these coping/surviving skills.

For example, many women have a good work ethic. They are good workers and are able to keep a job. When women come back to school, the teachers or tutors get focused on how much education they don't have rather than how they are or what they can already do.

There are different standards. We don't need the degrees to be successful in many areas, but education helps us to be more successful. Every step up the rung should be celebrated.

In this issue, we celebrate students' voices of strength and contribution. As students, we need to have a look at what we DO have rather than what we don't have. We DO have an important point of view. We ARE already making contributions to society, and they will become stronger with more education.

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# **Women in the Time of Covid**

**Women's Perspectives, Issue #16**

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## Art During Covid

Caroline Wang – Pleasanton Library Literacy Program

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Due to the pandemic, my children and I were forced to stay home. Boredom, anxiety, confusion, and many other negative emotions filled our home. I started learning Linocut and Lino Print through online courses around last August. It was an excellent way to do something productive with my time and a way to express my emotions and ideas. As I learned new techniques, my prints became more and more complex. I made a series of lino prints to record my daughter's life during the pandemic. 2021 is the year of the golden ox, so I designed a golden ox printed on red paper to celebrate Chinese New Year and gave to friends as gifts. Although our lives have been affected very negatively by Covid-19, it gave me a chance to learn something exciting and new.

*Editor's note: Caroline shared several of her prints with Women's Perspectives. The artwork on the cover is her work, and the lino prints you will see throughout the journal are her work as well.*



Caroline Wang, "Alyssa 1"

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## I'm Still Here

### Class Poems – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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*These poems were inspired by Langston Hughes' poem, "Still Here."*

I am still here, healthy and strong.  
I am still here with my family, my loved ones.  
I am still here fighting the pandemic.  
I am still here with Ms. Andrea's class.  
I'm still here.

**Yenny Guzman**

Even after everything I went through,  
all the hard and struggling times  
I'm still standing  
even though I'm getting tired.

**Mala Ramphal**

I'm still here  
Even though you leave me all the time  
But I'm still here  
when you come back.  
I'm still here for you, my sister  
Every time you need me  
I'm still here stronger  
to fight with your illness.

**Maria Martinez**

I'm still here  
Even though sometimes I feel like not coming.  
I'm still here in class  
trying to get my GED.

**Victor Aguilar**

I get scared when It's time for class –  
but I'm still here.  
My kids get me mad sometimes –  
But I'm still here.  
I argue with my boyfriend sometimes –  
But I'm still here.

**Sydell Johnson**

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I'm still here, even though I'm tired  
but nothing can stop me to continue doing my stuff.  
I have to keep going to reach my goals  
for them to come true.  
Tired but happy,  
I'm still here.

**Delly Parades**

Surviving through it all  
getting up every day  
going to work  
going to school  
taking care of business  
couch side through it all  
I am still here dealing with this Covid  
that has changed my life  
dealing with depressed days  
fighting through it all  
getting my GED  
sometimes asking is it worth it?  
But yet, all in all  
still I'm here  
I'm still here.

**Soki Brumfield**

Life is not how I pictured it to be.  
I thought being an adult was easy,  
I gave my parent such a hard time.  
Now that they're both deceased  
how I wish I could go back  
to being a little girl again  
without any responsibility.  
Mom and Dad, I really miss you  
I wish you are still here.

**Zeliatou Yussif**

I'm still here  
'Cause my goals are still here.  
I'm still here '  
cause my determination is still here,  
inside me.  
I'm still here to reach my goals  
I'm still here.  
And I'll stay here.

**Irma Rodriques**

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I am fasting fourteen hours every day  
I get tired with no eating and drinking  
only a sip of water  
but I'm still here.

I am really religious  
I have a night shift job  
but I'm still here.

I have two kids  
I'm a full-time house wife  
but I'm still here

It's not easy but I'm still here  
to achieve the dream  
that I want to turn into reality.

**Ishrath Khan**

From the voice of doubt  
to ears that shout  
I'm still here.  
From my pain to my shame  
I'm still here  
For those who sit and wait  
And those who love to hate  
I'm still here.

**Lavon Freeman**

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## Masks and Anxiety

Jacklyn Moreno – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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Wearing masks

They are hot and uncomfortable.

They give me headaches

Staying home

My anxiety is through the roof

My depression makes me stay in bed

Let's go back to school

So we can see

Our friends

Our counselors

Our teachers

Let's get back to normal

That is what we should be doing

Not stuck inside all the time.



Robert Moreno, "Jacklyn Wearing a Mask"

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## Corona Virus

Alejandra Tenorio – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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Courage

Not ordinary

Real

Optimistic

Never give up

Awesome

Vaccination

Important

Rising to be powerful

Unique

Stubborn

we will get through this, we will be alright.

Be happy

Laugh and love.

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## Stay Home Orders

Basic Education DSPS Class – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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This is a brainstorm that we did before writing our poem. It covers some of the feelings we had during COVID.

Annoying	Depressed	overwhelming
Frustrated	Social distancing	
Isolated	Six feet distance	done with it
Surviving	Masks	
Zoom	Stay home orders	

## Stay Home Orders

I am done with it!  
You have to be 6 ft away from people  
With your mask on  
I am depressed  
And frustrated.

To see each other  
We have to go to zoom meetings  
With our computers on  
I am overwhelmed  
And annoyed.

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We are surviving  
With social distancing  
We are isolated  
but making it

We are ready to get back to school  
With our teachers and friends  
I am excited  
To get my life back



*Marie Doerner and Students from San Diego Continuing Education*



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## **My Coronavirus Experience**

Anonymous – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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I remember that day like it was yesterday. The first recorded case of Covid 19 was on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 in my country of Trinidad and Tobago. I recall it so well because I was making plans for my Easter egg hunt and my phone rang. It was the baker asking if I would still need the order of cupcakes and if the egg hunt was still on because we now had a reported case of the Covid19 Virus in our country. I immediately turned on the television and there was a Press Conference being held by the Honourable Minister of Health Terrence Deyalsingh giving information to the nation about our first case and about the virus. I instantly had to put my Easter egg hunt on hold.

The next day it was reported that schools were going to be closed. I was panicking a little. I had to get some supplies from the supermarket and the pharmacy. I didn't want to get it myself, but I didn't have to because both the pharmacy and the supermarket were taking orders and doing deliveries. I didn't need to leave home.

I had become obsessed with the Press Conferences and with checking online for information concerning the Covid-19 Virus. I also read false news on social media and because of that my anxiety became uncontrollable. I decided to take a step back from the information coming in and deal with things I had control over.

As the country began to shut down, not knowing when things would be coming back to normal, I had to take some steps in my online clothing business. I had to sell out my inventory for a lesser price than I had intended. Also, I had to close my business down.

Now with all the free time I had I needed to find things to fill my days. I did two online sewing classes and an online cake baking class and at the beginning of 2021 I joined the ALTA Virtual literacy classes. This was something I needed to do for a long time but never had the time and having it online was a bonus for me. It is easier to be present for classes and some students also join the class while at work.

The Coronavirus has changed life as we know it. If we keep doing what is required of us to keep ourselves and our families safe, I believe things will get better and eventually return to normal.

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## **A Blessing in Disguise**

Mrs. Smith – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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In December 2019, the news of a mysterious disease in Wuhan China started to circulate. As the days and weeks passed, the reports kept getting worse. I was glued to my television. CNN became my go-to source for information. I was hoping that the disease was going to be limited to just China, but then I got the news that it had started spreading to Europe and its environs. Our Government informed us that they were not cancelling Carnival, which was of great concern, because people from all over the world come to Trinidad and Tobago for Carnival. Now I knew it was just a matter of time before Covid-19 was in sweet T&T. I was so worried because I knew that Trinis don't take anything seriously. "God is a Trini", they say.

On March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) assessed Covid-19 as a pandemic. The very next day, Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020, we got the expected, yet disappointing news of our first case. We all gathered in front of the television to watch the press conference held by the Minister of Health, Terrence Deyalsingh and the Minister of National Security, Stewart Young. The next day the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Keith Rowley held the first press conference. We started to hear words like social distancing, contact tracing, quarantine, front-line workers, essential workers, lock down, mandatory mask wearing, among other unfamiliar words that would forever change our lives.

As the information kept coming in, the seriousness of Covid-19 started to sink in. I started communicating with friends and family, both locally and internationally, about this new COVID 19 situation. I don't panic easily, but there was a fear of the unknown. The news reported that people were panic buying. Seeing the long lines at supermarkets and empty shelves at pharmacies was quite alarming.

Adjustments had to be made. The Prime Minister was saying, "This is the new normal."

I didn't get a sense of panic from the women around me. My mother said she would do what she had to, even if it made her uncomfortable at times. My sister was concerned about her job as she wasn't an essential worker.

Informing the children about Covid-19 and what it means, was necessary. All educational institutions were closed. My boys were happy there wasn't any school, but my daughter is a social butterfly. The idea of not being able to go out or see her friends didn't sit well with her. To keep the children from getting anxious and scared, we ensured that they had different gadgets, and sources of

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entertainment. For my children, the closure of KFC was the most devastating thing that could have happened. That's when Covid-19 became too much for them. My husband is an essential worker, so job loss was one less thing to worry about - I give God thanks every day because so many people have lost their jobs.

Only one of my children's teachers reached out to us parents. She started sending work through WhatsApp. There were a lot of resources online, so my other children were not left out. Teachers and private tutors were offering classes online, some were even offering free classes. Mohammed's Bookstore was offering free schoolbooks for children, of which my younger children were recipients. My younger son even did a free Creative Writing class online. The Government was offering vouchers and hampers. But honestly, I don't know of anyone who got. My children are what I call Tech-Babies. Zoom and Google classroom were easy for them. On September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, schools reopened, but online. The first week was kind of stressful, as everything was new and some of the teachers weren't familiar with the technology. Now my children do the online classes without supervision.

As schools were closed, online schooling became the next option, from which I benefitted tremendously. I am presently pursuing a Certificate in Principles of Pharmacy Technician. I have completed three craft classes online, for which I have gained certificates. At present, I am attending the ALTA Spelling Programme. All of this wouldn't have been possible without online learning being the NEW NORMAL. Covid-19 was life-changing to say the least. I don't party so not having Carnival didn't affect me personally, but I have friends who were affected.

I am hoping that online learning will be an option for those who don't want to return to physical school. For me, the pros of online learning are: knowing where your children are at all times; not having to worry about them being bullied; not having accidents in school and no hustling in the morning. The cons are the number of hours spent on these devices.

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the first frontline worker got vaccinated in Trinidad and Tobago. My family and I will not be taking the vaccine. I am concerned as the vaccine was rushed and not enough research went into it, along with the trials for its effectiveness. There are reports that the vaccine doesn't protect you from Covid-19. You can still contract Covid-19 even if you are vaccinated, which, to me, defeats the purpose of the vaccine.

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## I Am COVID

Jacklyn Moreno – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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I am sad and depressed  
I wonder how it will end  
I hear that the numbers keep going up  
I see us not going to school any time soon  
I want to see our friends and teachers again  
I am sad and depressed



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## **Women in the Time of COVID-19**

Norma Vega – Make the Road New Jersey

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In my family, we believe that “men are the head of household, but women are the neck of the body.”

That mean if the neck is not strong enough, the head does not have balance. We are all living in difficult times because of COVID-19 and as a woman I feel very worried about my family, and I think many of you feel the same as me. I just want to say in this small article that it’s OK to have all kinds of emotions or worries but it’s important that you know we are not alone. You can look for help, you can talk to somebody, and you can search on the internet about how to keep you and your family safe.

Women are a very important part of the world as part of the community, as workers, as mothers, etc.

Women – we are strong.

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## **Crisis of Trinidad**

### **Williams – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)**

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When Covid-19 started, at first, I didn't want to believe it, but then I heard it from the radio announcers. I was at work when I heard such news. My co-workers and I were scared and lost for words. When we found out it was true, we calmed down and just listened to what the Minister of Health had to say. My mom called and asked me if I heard about our first Covid case. I responded, "Yes". She then told me to be safe and come home straight. I did.

After a couple of weeks, I got laid off from my job. I was devastated. I didn't know what to do or where I could get a job during Covid. I spoke to my mom about what happened so we made a plan that we both could get groceries to support us until I got a job. It wasn't easy at all. After two months passed I finally got a job. The salary was small and it was hard at first but I made a lot of sacrifice moneywise. When I got my job my family and I made a huge grocery shopping and things were good with us. We had everything we wanted.

Our neighbourhood, especially the women, was devastated about the Covid-19 situation. A lot of women lost their jobs, most were at home a lot of the time. Some were single parents that needed help. Our Member of Parliament for the area, Mr. Adrian Leonce came into our area of Morvant with cases of water and hampers for everyone. We were so grateful.

When a few months had passed, our country had major changes. We had to wear handmade masks everywhere we went and wash and sanitize our hands regularly. Schools were closed until further notice. Non-essential businesses and fast-food outlets were closed as well. It felt to me like the world was coming to an end. It felt like the entire world was being punished. It took a toll on everyone. The people in my area were not too pleased but they all followed the instructions and wore their masks, etc. Also, places of worship were closed. Well, this really took a toll on our family. We are very serious about church, so for the churches to be closed it was hard for us.

After a few months classes and churches were online. It was unfortunate. It was different that most businesses were online. Every non-essential business was closed, making everyone uneasy, including me. It was a huge change which we all had to adjust to. It was not easy but day by day our country was getting things under control.

A lot of people disobeyed the rules and regulations that were in effect. They were having private parties and huge gatherings. People were getting fed up of being in the lockdown. Eventually the Prime Minister had given us an ease in some

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business areas, but still there were no huge gatherings. Bars especially, were closed at certain times.

Months passed and the Covid cases were getting worse. Now, people were dying and the entire country was back in lockdown. Things were getting really serious. There were police everywhere and there were lots of roadblocks. People were rushing to groceries to stock up because of the rise in Covid cases and deaths. At times, when my mom and sister visited me, I told them they had to sanitize and wash their hands. My mom wasn't too pleased, but she understood what I was trying to prevent.

There were a lot of women that were still out of jobs. Our MP tried his best to give out what he could. He told us that other communities needed things also. He then told us to use the groceries wisely. Things were not the same. The entire world was going through this Covid-19 crisis.

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## **COVID Is Hard**

Robin Flowers – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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It's been hard for me because I have to stay home. I just watch TV and I am bored. I just go out to my doctor's appointments and to buy food. I miss everything. I especially miss school.

My perception is that Covid's effect on women can be very serious. People can get sick and die.

A woman who is pregnant with Covid could affect her unborn baby. She can also spread the virus to others.

Everyone should know the symptoms: Fever, chills, diarrhea, loss of smell and taste, sore throat.

Ways to avoid Covid are to wash your hands, sanitize, and wear your mask.

Also, you should distance yourself: six feet. If you have symptoms, go to the hospital.

I can't get vaccinated yet, because I have many medical problems and I am too weak. I hope it is over soon.

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## Coping with COVID19

### Regis – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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Covid-19 was very devastating for many in Trinidad and Tobago and around the world. One of the choices I made during Covid-19 was not to panic. I went to the supermarket and purchased some foodstuff and stocked up.

Trinidad and Tobago got their first case of Covid 19 on March 12th 2020. People around me were panicking with fear that our country would end up like other countries with so many deaths.

One of the difficult requirements was staying inside and being confined to one place, only getting out when you needed food and medication. The whole pandemic situation was very new to me. I had to place myself in front of the television daily for information on how to cope with the new normal. Being in a pandemic was very difficult for many people because they had never been in a pandemic before.

Closing the borders affected a lot of people including my family and friends. I have family members still stuck in the United States and other countries.

During the lockdown my family lost income. My husband is self-employed and was unable to work. We had to survive on two salaries, but you know, it was not that bad after all! In some households, there was no one working during the lockdown. Many persons had lost their jobs. I was concerned for many women around me who didn't know how to deal with the situation. Some people didn't know how they were going to pay their bills and support their families. I had to reach out to one mother with three kids and supply foodstuff for them.

Many people had disregarded the order to use face masks to prevent others from getting the virus. "No Mask, No Service" was placed on the doors of many businesses. Washing of hands and sanitizing was mandatory to enter any business place. If the washing of hands and sanitizing were known before, so any people would not have died.

I was able to practise social distancing to protect myself and others from getting the virus. Other persons were not adhering to the rule of social distancing. At present, community spread is the main concern for the Health Minister, Terrence Deyalsingh. He kept warning the people not to congregate in large groups to prevent the spread of the Covid 19 virus.

On February 18th 2021, Trinidad and Tobago was gifted by Barbados with Astra Zeneca vaccines. These first vaccines were given to the frontline workers on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2021.

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## Covid and Me

Maliya Sulemana – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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I am a member of Muslim's women association in our masjid. Right now, in the world we are in a fight of our lives against corona virus. It has affected many people including myself. I used to go to masjid every Friday to perform my Friday prayers with my co-Muslims sisters and friends.

We used to hug each other ,shake hands and sat together, did some Quran recitation. Especially in the month of Rahman. In Rahman I used cook food from my house and brought it to the masjid to share with everyone there.

Last year with preparation and social distances, I did all my whole month of Rahman prayers at home. My biggest fear is how long are we going to continue like this?



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## **Finding My Strength in Covid**

N.P.P. – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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Like many other people I thought that Covid-19 would pass us by, but I was wrong. Instead, it was knocking at my door. I was shaken emotionally by it. I lost my job with no backup income, not even a plan. How am I going to handle this now?

Insomnia was at its peak for me – worrying all the time about providing for my children and myself. I needed a magic trick, or even better, a miracle and I needed it like yesterday.

One night while looking at television, the news reporter announced that there were 40 additional positive cases. The Government took quick measures to close the country's borders. Then came the lockdown.

I think I started to go insane. No time for myself in the house. Twenty-four hours with no food and the children talking non-stop. I will not even mention my husband.

From being able to provide for my family I was now feeling helpless, Do you know how that feels? But that's all right because I am a strong-minded woman and if you knew me you would know that I love a challenge. I always play to win. Like the phoenix, I too will rise not just for myself but for my children as well.

I may be shaken but I'm not broken.

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## How Covid-19 Changes My Relationships with My Husband

Zeliatou Yussif – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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He works two jobs, one as a taxi driver. The second job is in the hospital as a cleaning supervisor which he loves. Before Covid-19 everything was normal and we did not have to worry about anything. Now we worry about where to put our clothing and shoes that we wear to work. Even about how we sleep with each other.

Now, every time I get back from work, my uniform and shoes go in a clear bag, separate from our regular laundry bags and the same for my husband. We both work two jobs, so you can imagine the laundry we pile up by the end of every week.

I work as a home health aide, caring for someone who lives with her family members in their home. It is very insecure for my safety because the family members also go back and forth to their work. They have a lot of instructions that I have to follow while working there.

My client's daughter said to me, "Zee, please, whenever you get to work, before you do anything, wash your hands. Do not under any circumstances remove your face mask".

She continued "Make sure you stay six feet away from my mother because I don't want her sick from what ever you bring to this house and it can affect all of us".

Before Covid, I already don't get to spend much time with my husband already, due to our work schedules, but at least at the end of the day. I get to hug and kiss him, I also get to cuddle in bed with him to feel a human touch at night.

But thanks to Covid, I miss all of the above. I feel alone and distant like my husband is far away from me but we are in the same house still sharing the same bed with me facing one side and him facing the other way. So that we both don't breathe on each another, all in fear of not getting Covid-19 from me or vice-versa.

I told my husband, "It hurts me how Covid has kept me away from you. It is not easy to have this big distance when you are in reach. I feel like miles away".

Then he said, "I feel your pain, my dear, you know how I love you, how I enjoy our time together and I also feel like we are separated from love due to Covid. Not being able to touch or hug you so close to me breaks my heart and I hate how it makes me feel deep down if you know what I mean".

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Then I said, "I thought I was the only one experiencing this feelings".

He said, "Not at all, my love. The feeling is mutual".

I said to him, "I wish we could go away just the two of us for a week and not worry about anything else but us."



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## **My Journey Through Covid-19**

Razeen Samad – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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The start of the pandemic occurred on March 12th 2020 in beautiful Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister of Health, Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh confirmed the first case of Covid-19 in Trinidad and Tobago. To me it was very scary to know that one of the deadliest viruses in the world had reached my beautiful country, and so it began.

At the end of March 2020, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago started to put restrictions in certain places to help to stop the spread of Covid-19. I am not lying to tell you surviving with Covid-19 is very difficult and stressful. I am a single mother of two beautiful children. It has been very hard to cope because I need things for my kids and due to the Covid-19 no one is hiring people to work. Many people lost their jobs due to the pandemic. It is so sad but by God's grace and my loving family and beautiful friends I am surviving. When I feel stressed I put on my music and dance and relax.

Our country was in lockdown for about three months. We were not allowed to go to places such as the beaches, malls, cinemas, schools and places of worship and no in-house dining was allowed. I was unhappy because of it. I love to take my kids out to have fun, but we had to adapt to the situation that was taking place at the time. I had to take the chance of going out in public to get food items and stationery supplies for my kids and myself.

I am a proud Level two student at ALTA. In the beginning it was difficult to join a virtual class because I did not know what to do. I never used Zoom before so it was a new experience for me. Another difficulty, as the internet drops we lose our connection, but I am loving my virtual classes.

One thing I miss a lot is meeting and socializing with my friends. I am a social butterfly I love to meet new people. I miss not being able to hug my family and friends, but we have to do the right thing. I am what you call a high-risk patient because I suffer from asthma. It is difficult to breathe with a mask on. I always have a big bottle of sanitizer and a few extra masks in my handbag.

The women in my area, Coal Mine, are striving as we look out for each other. I encourage all my neighbours not to give up. Things will get better in the near future. Some of the struggles we mothers are facing are as the kids are home they are eating more often. Sometimes we run out of food and I have to go out to buy more. Mothers have it hard because we have to cook all day and have to help teach our kids schoolwork and do all our housework. Sometimes we do not have any time to rest, as you lie down all you hear is "Mummy."

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Lately, I have been hearing so much negative feedback from around the world about the vaccine. I would be lying if I tell you I am going to take the vaccine because I am scared.

This is my journey through Covid-19.



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## **My COVID 19 Experience**

Claudette – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Trinidad and Tobago confirmed its first COVID19 case. This was after the W.H.O. declared COVID19 to be a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

After the declaration many events were cancelled.

Eventually we went into lockdown and our borders were closed. Citizens that were outside of the country at that time could not return. When the government allowed persons to return, they had to be placed in quarantine. This was a difficult time for the country and my family also. My children could not visit their father and me. My prayer group for women also had to stop having meetings at my home.

I still encouraged friends, family and the women around me daily on the phone when they were discouraged.

It was a happy experience to begin my literacy learning. Thankfully, I was used to attending programs online so that classes were not too difficult to do. Apart from class, I have enjoyed the ways I could connect with persons online as I have been able to attend church services with members in different countries without taking a flight or paying a cent.

There is now a lot of information concerning the vaccine. Many people are concerned about the possible side effects and whether it is safe or wise to take the vaccine. I have not yet decided if I would take it. I am praying about it and so we will see what the good Lord decides. All in all, COVID 19 has certainly changed the way we do things.

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## **Covid 19 Pandemic**

Anonymous – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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A Friday I will not forget, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2020. I was having pizza and wine with friends after work and we heard on the news that Trinidad had its first confirmed Covid-19 case and all schools will be closing. I am one of those people that says, “God is a Trini” and “Covid won’t reach us”. Fear stepped in as I started to wonder if anyone at the restaurant had the virus and I immediately wanted to go home. I felt the need to be with my family.

We paid the bill and I headed home thinking about what was going to happen. Is the government going to shut down the country? Do we have enough food? We need to have cash in hand. When I arrived home my husband was there flicking the television from local CNC3, to CNN and BBC. I rushed to my pantry and started making a list of the things we needed to stock up on. My daughter was just happy she did not have school. I had hundreds of messages, from the many group chats with friends, family and colleagues touching base, advising each other what to do, what to buy and how to keep ourselves safe.

Early the next day I headed to PriceSmart Members Club where I felt all Trinidadians usually go. There were no trolleys, long lines, everyone was just panic buying. People felt scared, there were long lines at every supermarket and pharmacy because they were ensuring they had sufficient food and medical supplies. For some reason everyone seemed to be stocking up on toilet paper and paper towels.

Most of the women I know felt scared and took every possible precaution to keep their families safe.

As the days went by more Covid cases were reported. There were some residents returning from a cruise, many of whom were infected with the virus and some deaths were recorded. As the number of deaths increased so did the restrictions. The government announced the lockdown, only allowing essential services to open, those being supermarkets and pharmacies. We were advised to wear face masks and the washing of hands became the norm everywhere.

Being employed in an organization that was deemed an essential service, things got rough for me. To manage the emotions and uncertainty that the employees expressed was the biggest challenge our organization had to deal with during the lockdown. Everyone was scared, the employees complained that they felt unsafe and were putting their families at risk. My family felt sad and unsafe because I had to go out to work some days. The staff went into survival mode and are still surviving with God’s grace.

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Despite the lockdown and the feeling of fear and uncertainty, there were some positives for me and many of my friends and relatives. It brought us closer together just by constantly checking on each other, ensuring that everyone was okay and had everything they needed. I cooked things I never thought I could, enjoyed baking with my daughter, had many movie nights and resumed ALTA.

I was very happy when my ALTA tutor reached out to me asking if I would like to participate in a class via Zoom. We started classes and I was able to complete that level and move on to the next level. I enjoy these online classes immensely as the tutors make learning easy and interesting. I also love learning in the comfort of my home and will encourage anyone to join ALTA online classes, embrace the opportunity to learn and improve themselves despite Covid-19.



*Caroline Wang, "Alyssa 2"*

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## **Goodbye Letter to 2020**

Daisy Mayers – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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It would be great to say goodbye to COVID 19. We do need to start manifesting it. What I'm dealing with is setting boundaries and setting limits. For those of us who are very giving, we can easily over extend ourselves because we are people pleasers. Once we are over extended, we get tired and depleted. We need to save some energy for ourselves.

People say I love your energy, they think we are just born with good energy. But what they don't realize is that this is work. You have to engage in activities that revive you. I like to sew and take care of my plants. For some people, it is reading a book or going for a walk or praying. These days it is very popular to meditate. Whatever works for you, make sure you revive yourself. Otherwise you have nothing to give.

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## **Not Thankful and Thankful**

Yenny Guzman – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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Not thankful, to make me feel anxious for staying home and not be able to go outside.

Not thankful for my children who miss education and stay home to do class work.

Not thankful for waiting in a long line to buy groceries.

Not thankful for making my social life difficult Not thankful for making me feel afraid, stressful, and worried about if my family might have COVID-19.

Not thankful for seeing people that don't wear face masks and make the pandemic go worse.

Not thankful for not being prepared without face masks, hand sanitizer, gloves or food.

I am thankful for my family.

I am thankful that my family and I never got sick from COVID-19.

I am thankful that my husband has a job and pays all the bills and also brings us food.

I am thankful for the teachers that help me to understand how to work with google classroom so my children could learn.

I am thankful that we always have faith and always believe it will end soon.

I am especially thankful to God that he protected my family and myself during the pandemic.

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## **Covid and Me**

Sydell Johnson – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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When COVID started it was really bad. It was so bad we all had to start wearing masks and it made it so we could not see our family and friends and made it so we could not do nothing or go out. And people started to pass away and me and my kids could not go to school and had to start the zoom which put a lot on the kids, making it really hard to do school. And we could not go to church and I love and miss my church family Now its starting to get a little better family and friends getting together again people starting to go out again. Its just that we still have to put on mask I just hope and pray we can get back to normal.

I just wish things could go back to normal.

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## Thankful and Not Thankful

Soki Brumfield – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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I am so thankful for being here and not getting covid-19. So many people have died from the epidemic. I get to get up and make my life better so I am thankful for that. I'm not thankful for how people are behaving. So many people have attitudes and angry out here in this world. It seems like people just don't appreciate life. Every day you get to get up and try to make your life better on this Earth. People should be more grateful because so many did not get up this morning.



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## **Thank You to My Lovely Husband**

Ishruth Khan – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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I want to thank my husband because I still remember last year on March 22 I had fever, then my doctor told me that I had Covid-19 positive. I knew I got that Covid-19 from my job because I didn't go anywhere except my job. A few days later I found out my co workers also had COVID. In that hard time my husband really take care of me. I felt like I will die but my husband is always there for me. I really want to thank my lovely husband.



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## Woman During COVID-19

Mahadai Mahindranauth – York College Learning Center

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Wake up in the morning and see the beautiful atmosphere and thank God for another day , feel the soft breeze touch your hold body making you feel so blessed being a woman on earth. A woman always pleases God in so many ways,

because God is so merciful and intelligent, great magnanimous, exceedingly glorious, infinite and all-powerful and also pitiful .

God is so grateful to his children, he is always there to bless his children and provide health, wealth and happiness for them.

During this pandemic, a woman never loses faith in her God because she goes on her knee and begged God for strength and for God to give her courage and help her to provide for her family and guide her enemy and protect everyone on this planet earth.

The purpose of our lives is to be happy. That's why a strong woman always follows the positive way in life. Especially during this Covid. She never makes her family go hungry, she rather starves herself and makes her family stomach full.

A woman is a blessing from God.



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## **Giving Thanks to That One Special Person**

Lavon Freeman – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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During this tough time in the world I wanted to take this time to thank a very special one who always kept me in good spirits, no matter how I was feeling. Her candid ability some how some way made me feel that I can do anything, as long as I put my mind to it. I'm very thankful for her, and her wisdom. She has made me open up my eyes to a-lot of things , as well as education. She teaches me to understand that In complete darkness, we are all the same , that it is only our knowledge that separates us.

Don't let your eyes deceive you , because education is a joint effort of mind and eyes.



Leslie Cheung

7/30

Nan

2021. 8. 5

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## My Fear of Covid 19

Vanessa – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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Life was going one day at a time, persons taking each other, family and friends for granted, saving for tomorrow things that could have been done today. Then there was a news buzz and what appeared to be a harmless flu proliferated and rapidly spread throughout the world. Welcome Covid 19 and the new norm. Goodbye life as we knew it for now!

I remember some time in December 2019, there was breaking news that somewhere in Wuhan, China an outbreak of some sort was happening. No one knew for sure what it was nor if there was a cure. In all honesty, at first no one knew how it was spread.

As the weeks went by, there was a massive increase in the number of cases. Some recovered, some relapsed and on January 11<sup>th</sup> 2020 the first death was recorded – a 61 year old man of Wuhan. Fear and panic broke out as the death toll quickly rose. China and its surrounding countries had a widespread shut out of Wuhan.

That seemed to have curbed the rapid spread of the virus in China. It wasn't enough to have contained the spread from the rest of the world though.

In early January 2020, while talking to some ladies at an outreach centre where we volunteer, I made mention, should poor governance occur and the virus break our shore, should my children God forbid be exposed to Covid 19, I would make the ultimate sacrifice and lay my life on the line with them. The other women were in agreement with me. The crippling fear of the unknown and the speed at which the virus ravaged through countries made that conclusion inevitable for us.

Thankfully, good governance was in control and Trinidad and Tobago was able to abate the rapid infectious influx of Covid 19 by installing protocols such as hand washing, sanitizing (when hand washing is not readily available) and social distancing. The government also appointed quarantine facilities such as Couva Children's Hospital and stepdown facilities like Sangre Grande Centre (Brooklyn Facility) where physical distancing could be adhered to if self-quarantining was impossible at home.

On January 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, Japan, South Korea and Thailand were next on the list to report Covid 19 cases. The first confirmed case in the United States came the following day, on January 21<sup>st</sup> a man in his thirties who had just returned from

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Wuhan. The world took a rapid spiral hit from there on out. We are yet to recover.

On March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) assessed Covid 19 as a pandemic. The next day, March 12<sup>th</sup>, Trinidad and Tobago confirmed its first case. Schools were immediately closed, the country went into a panic. There were long lines in front of groceries, poultry shops and supermarkets nationwide.

Religiously every day for the next couple of months, we listened to the updates on local television, TTT. I ventured out only once a month to get our basic needs. Keys, hand sanitizer, wallet and mask became the new normal, then new norm as it's referred to. I swear every time I go out and return home, I feel my throat getting sore or my skin warm. Fear of community spread.

It was the same for two of my sisters as they were deemed essential workers and were placed on rotation when the lockdown was implemented from March 16<sup>th</sup> to May 10<sup>th</sup> 2020. The mandatory mask wearing law came into effect on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2020.

Lives have been destroyed, there has been so much death. One minute you are laughing with a loved one telling them to be safe, wear your mask, sanitize and the next they have been dropped off outside a hospital. You get a call that he has been placed on a ventilator and you cry and pray. The next call is that he died alone on a hospital bed.

I can relate to this. It is what happened with my uncle and cousin-in-law in the United States of America, one month apart. Death! Now that is where the race begins. Because of the uncertainty of the virus, remains were lost/misplaced. No time to identify or cross 'T's' and dot 'I's'. Mass grave burial was implemented, containers of bodies lined the streets.

Fortunately for us, though having members that are part of the front line as well as my uncle being an ex-military, we were able to recover their bodies for burial. Their funerals were done virtually allowing family and friends from all over the world to join in on the celebration of their lives.

Schooling, meetings, extracurricular classes, certain businesses, food deliveries, church, ALTA classes and many more adapted to online forums to conduct necessary transactions and interactions. Secondary school students (my daughter included) and primary school students preparing for examinations were allowed by mid-2020 to go in person to write their exams, under strict WHO guidelines.

Trinidad and Tobago's first death was recorded on March 25<sup>th</sup> 2020 - a seventy-seven year old man. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2, this is the virus strain. To date 2.63 million deaths have been recorded worldwide, in just one year. One hundred and forty (140) from Trinidad and Tobago alone.

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Immunocompromised persons are most at risk. One in twenty homes has such a person, yet there are weekly reports of large, illegal, private parties. People, what is going on? Have you not heard of super spreaders?

My Covid 19 story is about fear, fear of going out and greater fear of coming back in. It has been the longest, shortest, saddest, happiest, scariest year of my life. 2020 – 2021 has me appreciating the smaller things in life/ It has taught me the value of family and friends. It has me imploring the powers of faith, hope and prayer, invoking a greater understanding and respect towards God. Covid-19 is a silent, odourless, tasteless, fearless beast that invades the human body and destroys it from the inside - shutting down your body and organs.

Living with Covid-19 is like living near a dormant volcano. You never know when, where, how or why. You just live on alert.

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## The Time of Covid

Andrea Dube – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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The Coronavirus started in Wuhan, China in early December 2019. During this time, most of us were unaware of its significance. I didn't know anything about the coronavirus and did not think much of it at the time but I used to listen to the daily news and I could hear the reporters talking about the Coronavirus which is also known as the Covid-19.

My sister informed me about the seriousness of the virus because around that time people started dying when they contracted it. The virus began spreading quickly from country to country. I became worried because Carnival was approaching in Trinidad and Tobago and people usually come from all different parts of the world to enjoy our national culture.

After Carnival ended and I realized that there were no covid-19 cases in Trinidad and Tobago, I breathed a sigh of relief but I was still worried about other countries. My sister kept telling me about the seriousness of the virus because at the time she was at home and would keep abreast of the daily news.

On March 12th 2020, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, more specifically Trinidad, received its first Covid-19 case. I remembered the day so vividly. I was working and a customer came into my workplace and said that someone came into the country with the Covid-19 virus and was placed into quarantine. On my way home, the announcement was made on the news. By the time I got home, both my mother and sister were aware of the news and they became afraid saying, "We got a case of the virus". The Health Minister also confirmed this tragedy. Some days later, another case was confirmed and unfortunately this person succumbed to the deadly virus.

We soon realized that every new case that was discovered came from a person that recently arrived in Trinidad and on March 22nd 2020, the Government decided to close our borders. To date, our borders remain closed. In addition to the closure of our borders, all our beaches were closed and all persons that were classed as non-essential workers had to remain at home, thus putting the country in a state of lock down.

I remember when people began panic buying grocery items such as hand sanitizers and hand soap as well as other cleaning products which eventually became difficult to acquire. Some persons began manufacturing their own hand sanitizers and started selling them. Soon afterwards, the Health Minister announced that a face mask had to be worn in all public spaces. This was

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especially hard for me because I suffer from asthma, so I avoided going out in public.

My mother also avoided going outdoors unless it was absolutely essential and she even became a little paranoid. It became quite difficult for us to survive because I stayed at home and was no longer generating an income. Eventually, the government issued grants to persons who became unemployed and this helped to ease my burden. Grocery items were donated by good Samaritans to assist my household.

Returning to work was a delightful feeling even though there were a number of changes that were made to my daily life. Social distancing, wearing a face mask, washing and sanitizing one's hands all became mandatory.

Whilst working one day, I was listening to local radio 100.1 FM and I heard an announcement for ALTA virtual classes. I wrote down the contact information and called them the following day to sign up for the classes. ALTA virtual classes has been a tremendous help to me because I am being taught by two wonderful tutors who dedicate their time in assisting me to improve my literacy. I always look forward to my Monday and Wednesday ALTA virtual classes which help to keep my mind off the stresses of Covid-19.

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## My Covid-19 Story

Nicole James – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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On March 11th 2020 the World Health Organisation declared Covid 19 a pandemic. On March 12th 2020 the first case of Covid 19 in Trinidad and Tobago was confirmed by Minister of Health, Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh. It was the day people started to panic. The supermarket was full of people buying the stuff they needed. We tried getting as much information on the television as the Honorable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley addressed the nation about what it is about and what measures were being set in place to deal with the virus.

Dr. Rowley started by closing schools, cinemas, churches, bars, beaches and all outdoor activities. We had to be socially distanced, wash our hands and sanitize. In some countries worldwide you had to wear your mask. Now in Trinidad and Tobago you can't go and buy anything without your mask. There were many job cuts. Some people learnt to do things that they never imagined they could do. Some families got time to bond with each other. This pandemic taught many of us how to appreciate what we have.

China was the first country to get Covid 19 and first get the vaccine. On February 18th 2021 Trinidad and Tobago got our first shipment of the Astra Zeneca vaccine. Some people were asking if they take the vaccine would they still have to wear their mask. Some people are afraid to take the vaccine because people are experiencing discomfort in their bodies such as blood clots in their feet. I saw that some of the elderly in America were happy that they got the vaccine so they could visit their loved ones and hug them again. It's been a year now and all over the world nothing is the same. We will not be able to have our normal lives back any time soon. There have been reports of a second wave of Covid-19 in China.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the restaurant where I work had to close down due to the economy. Everyone was at home making the best of everything. We had to exercise a lot because we started putting on weight since we were cooking all kinds of different foods. You couldn't go out anywhere to eat. At times I thought the lockdown wouldn't ever end. Eventually our Prime Minister started to reopen some places. We were excited to go to the beach. We went to the Savannah and enjoyed ourselves. My sister and niece got their jobs back and now they work on rotation. We make the best of it and we interact a lot.

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Some citizens are still not taking it seriously. They are still not wearing their masks and are having private events all over the country. The police have to be on the lookout to try and control the crowds of people that don't have any behaviour.



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## **10 Quarantine Workers Who Still Have a Job**

Alejandra Tenorio – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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### **Food shops with a drive thru**

A lot of people do not like to cook so a drive thru is more easy. They will not close any time soon. People need to eat.

### **Starbucks**

People need their coffee in a quarantine. I like a good hot chocolate.

### **Laundramats**

We need clothes, but I have a dryer and washer.

### **Writers**

This is all kinds of writers small and big. Now they are working more. I hope they are safe. I'm writer too.

### **Singers**

Make a song and put it on a CD or website and sell it.

### **Grocery stores**

We need to eat still. There are people who like to cook. Grocery stores are making money.

### **Liquor stores**

They are making bank some liquor stores are walking distance so you not need a car. You can walk your dog.

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### **Marijuana dispensary**

This never closes even when there are earthquakes. Some people use it for medical use, or for fun. It is up to you.

### **YouTube**

Need a computer, laptop or cell phone they can stay at home by the pool if they have one.

### **Homeworkers**

People who work from home this is easy for them, unless their kids are home all day.

We need to keep us busy hopefully I can go back to work soon.

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## Covid-19 Story

C.S. – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened the lives of many – both locally and by extension internationally. Having to battle with the virus has taken its course leaving many with a scar to remember. Since December 2019, I can still remember hearing the news about this coronavirus coming from China and the potential impact on a person's health and the economy.

However, this became a reality in March 2020, almost one year ago, when the Prime Minister announced that there would be a serious restriction with respect to movement and human interaction within Trinidad and Tobago. I especially recall sitting and watching in amazement and horror as several things I enjoyed doing such as hanging out, visiting the beach, enjoying a bite of bake and shark, cooking by the river and even simple things like being able to sit in a taxi, were being impacted.

Almost every person in the country was forced to remain at home. The pandemic brought me to a point where I was in a state of anxiety, causing me to spiral into frustration, creating panic about not having enough money to sustain my family. I even recall the fear of leaving the house to simply go to the grocery to pick up food items.

Due to the uncertainty of not knowing how long the shutdown was going to last, there were times when I had to explain to my young nieces and nephews why schools were closed. The closure of school also created panic among the younger ones who were preparing to sit the Secondary Entrance Assessment, as they were worried about not having the opportunity to complete their studies.

I even recall having to counsel a close friend whose livelihood was dependent on driving a taxi. His income continues to be negatively impacted by the pandemic as to this day he cannot operate his taxi at full capacity. Similarly, another friend of mine, who worked in a gym, lost her job due to the length of time they were forced to remain closed. It was really sad to witness.

At a point in time, my grandmother did not want to leave the house because of the fear instilled in her by watching the news constantly. She was afraid of catching this virus due to her medical condition because she feared that her chance of surviving the virus was slim to none.

Over the past few months, the lockdown allowed us to learn to live with limited movement and eventually I was able to return to work. The changes made as a result of the pandemic are the new normal and my challenge is juggling school and work once again. Additionally, the government, educational institutions and

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some businesses across the nation began implementing policies that allowed persons to work or attend school from home. This resulted in many persons investing in laptops, printers and tablets.

I remember finally being able to visit the beach after four to six months and to be able to press my feet into the sand. In spite of all the challenges, the entire year has been one of struggle and adversity for many, including me. Thankfully, Trinidad and Tobago has not been impacted as badly as the rest of the world, especially the United States where over five hundred thousand people died from the coronavirus.

While it is not something I'm accustomed to, I must say that I, along with many others, am tired of having to wear a mask that impacts on one's ability to breathe properly. Also, I anxiously await the day when I can go out and not have my makeup or lipstick smeared. With this in mind, I understand the importance and safety of wearing the facemask and I, therefore, will be wearing my mask with a smile.

One of the things I missed most of all is being able to travel as I look forward to going to another island. I'm optimistic as to what the next couple of months will bring now that vaccines are becoming available.

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## Women's Struggle in Pandemic

Geetha Samayamanthula – South Brunswick Public Library

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According to the 19th amendment, the constitution gave women in the U.S right to vote. This hard one right foretold the increasing the presence of women not only in the voting booth but also in the workplace.

Since the late 1970's without the increasing participation of women in the workforce, household income growth of the middle class has largely stagnated and historically women are the primary caregiver in the family. Working women shouldering multiple tasks to meet their family and financial needs.

COVID-19's massive disruption to child care, employment, school routines and after school programs have been hard on working mothers. They have to take one more responsibility of childcare which leads to frequently reducing their hours of work or leaving their jobs entirely in response has crippled the economy and pushed millions of women and families to the financial brink.

COVID-19 has a devastating effect on women and girl's sexual and reproductive health and their access to care. According to the survey there could be upto 7 million unintended pregnancies worldwide because of the crisis, with potentially thousands of deaths from unsafe abortions and complicated births due to inadequate access to emergency care. The most concerning part about this is public health care facilities have been repurposed for COVID-19. For example community health care workers have been allocated to COVID-19 prevention, identification and treatment instead of offering family planning services. The disruption in global supply chains for contraception could result in more sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

In some countries, telehealth services have been an effective way of providing abortion services. Health systems need to find ways to continue to deliver health services safely by adopting their service settings or implementing telemedicine models where feasible.

COVID-19 has a devastating effect on Women's mental health. The stress levels of stay at home moms getting increased during the pandemic as the family was at home and they were doing their work and kids were attending classes from home made the situation of homemakers become difficult. They needed to be involved in many kinds of activities to entertain their kids and also adapting different methods to keep the family safe and healthy. They didn't get a chance to take care of themselves at all. The tyrant behaviour of the homeowners leads

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the domestic violence to worsen. There is also growing anxiety about the increase in gender based violence.

This year the international day of women and girls in science will focus on female scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. Female scientists really did a good job by working along with other scientists for inventing vaccines for COVID-19. Their contribution in the healthcare sector is highly appreciable.

Finally the vaccine for COVID-19 came into existence. Health officials were working hard to achieve herd immunity throughout the country. Because herd immunity only makes it possible to protect the population from a disease including those who cannot be vaccinated such as newborns or who have compromised immune systems. Nowadays most of the population refused to take the vaccines due to additional complications. Health officials worry that herd immunity will be threatened as more parents choose not to vaccinate. It only is achieved when vaccination levels are high. If they achieve herd immunity throughout the country that will be a real feather for the health officials. Almost 70% of healthcare workers are womens and their contributions to achieve herd immunity is highly appreciable.

As a homemaker I too face many issues but I turned this difficult time into an opportunity to learn something new.

“Every cloud has silver lining”

Let’s hope for the best!!!

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## Story of Covid 19

Justlyn Griffith – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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The deadly disease Covid-19 started in Wuhan China in December 2019, there were some rumors that it hit other countries, in Trinidad and Tobago we were praying and hoping that it would not hit our island. We had our Carnival celebrations coming up.

In March people started feeling ill only to be told when they got tested that they had the virus. The Health Minister advised that people should wear masks, wash hands, sanitize and maintain social distance. To tell the truth, the Covid-19 hit me, not in getting sick but by listening to what was going on in the world. It was strange the way the virus was spreading fast, just going from one country to the next, all over the world.

We were in a bad state for a while but were trying to cope. I was keeping a watchful eye on what was going on. I listened to the television and the radio to gather as much information as I could, to know what was really going on around the world. The virus was still spreading. Every time someone came in from the airport or on a cruise ship they were taken into quarantine for 14 days before going home to their family.

The doctors and nurses were hit really hard because they couldn't go home to their families as often as they would like. They were treating more and more cases day by day.

The pandemic to me was both a good and a bad because it brought out things people were hiding in the closet. For instance, people who could cook or had many other skills were doing it all because of the virus while others were taking chances and enjoying it too.

The restaurants and a lot of other places were closing their doors now, but life goes on. Some people were saying that the virus can't stop them from doing what they want to do; they were not taking control of their lives but putting others at risk. Some were partying when they were told, 'no gathering', some were going to the beaches, they were just not taking this virus seriously.

We had the first death in this country in March. Before August and after the election we had hell let loose, we were having death after death as the weeks passed. The Minister of Health kept advising us to keep safe, wear masks, wash hands, sanitize and practice social distancing.

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Right now, the pandemic is still here and people are going about as usual, but you know that a little birdie is saying there is a phase two coming. I rebuke that in the name of Jesus.



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## The Time of Covid-19

Jada – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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When I first heard about Covid-19, I was still going to classes. It was the last day of class. Everyone was talking about it. At first, I didn't believe it but then I heard it on the news. The next day I was looking at the news and they were talking about closing schools and the children had to stay home. Parents had to stay home from work to be with their children.

Days passed but no change. There were a lot of cases and a lot of people lost their lives because of the Covid. It got so bad with a lot of new cases and more deaths, that the Prime Minister had to lock down the country. During the lock down it was hard for me because I didn't have a phone at the time to talk with my friends and family. Months passed and still no change.

When they decided to open back the country we were allowed to have home parties but only ten people were allowed to attend. It was going good and I got to see my family but some people weren't listening and had more than ten people in their homes. So, they had to lock back down the country again, but this time we weren't allowed to go to church, bars, restaurants and the movies. The borders were also closed so we couldn't travel in and out of the country.

Months passed but things were still the same, there were more cases and people lost their lives. When the country opened back we had to wear masks, social distance - stay six feet apart at all times even when going to the store. Food got really expensive along with toilet supplies and hair supplies.

The worst part was not getting to see my family as much and not being able to hug them when I wanted to. When I was at home, I ate a lot a lot and started to put on weight. I was in a lot of pain and it got worse. My mom told me I needed to start working out. I did, but in the beginning I didn't like it. I went to work out once a week and started to lose weight and I was happy with the results. I increased this to five days a week. My rest days would be the weekend.

There were still more cases and people died. The police started charging people for not wearing their masks and they even shut down the parties they were having. They did this so Covid-19 wouldn't spread as fast, but still people weren't listening. Globally, a lot of people lost their lives.



Caroline Wang, "Wings"

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## Memory of My Aunt

Kataline Martell – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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My Aunt Miriam was 62 years old when she died of COVID in February. She had two sons, three grandsons and two granddaughters. Aunt Miriam was loved by many people. She was the life of the party, always with a smile. But, also, quick to let you know about yourself. Everyone respected her.

I remember one summer we all went to the Statue of Liberty. Wow! We had so much fun. We laughed so hard because the stairs to walk up were so long. My mom was up front, and I was behind my mom. Aunt Miriam was behind me with my cousins.

Aunt Miriam yelled up to Mom, “Sis, I don’t think I can make it! How many more steps?”

“A million,” Mom replied. “Come on. You can do it.”

We had like two more flights of stairs to go. We all were out of breath, but we made it to the crown of the Statue of Liberty. We gasped for air when we saw the beautiful view of our five boroughs of New York City.

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## **COVID Took Me Back to School**

Margaret Fudge – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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I was born in 1966 in San Diego, California. However, my relatives first came to San Diego in 1959. My family came to San Diego because my dad got out of the US Navy. Kansas is so flat that California seemed like a good place to go. Since then we have stayed here.

My occupation is a babysitter for my family, but this COVID 19 pandemic has allowed me to go back to school. A few years ago, I had back problems and my doctor told me that sitting in class and riding on the bus every day was no good for me. I had to quit. Now COVID-19 has let me be a student again because I go to school on-line.

COVID-19 has changed my daily life because the schools are out and while I babysit two kids, I can still go to school. Usually, their parents are at work, but now we are all home together. A big happy family.

My neighborhood is doing a good job as well. The neighbor kids are not coming by any more. They are staying with their families because the kids can't play together outside. They have to stay in the house.

COVID-19 has not changed my mind about living in San Diego. I enjoy living here because of the beaches and the great parks.

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## **My Lifestyle Changes As a Result of Covid 19**

Cassandra Martyr – Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA)

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On March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, the World Health Organization declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic and health protocols were put in place in many countries. Around then I started hearing words like “social distancing and protocols,” and by the end of March our borders were closed. We had about ten persons infected when we went into our first lockdown. It was frightening, I was anxious all the time and didn’t want to leave the house. The television was on all day while I was trying to stay updated on the community spread. All the information was given daily by our Minister of Health and Chief Medical Officer on what the government was doing to protect citizens. Health care systems around the world were stocking up on personal protective equipment and getting prepared for massive influxes of infected persons. There was panic and uncertainty because there was so much about coronavirus that we did not know. The only way to fight the pandemic was to make sure people followed social distancing and maintained good hygiene practices until a vaccine is rolled out.

The effect Covid-19 had on my life is one I will never forget. I had to take a good look at my age, my health and the pre-existing conditions. I have thyroid issues, high blood pressure and diabetes. These are what the doctors call comorbidities. I was considered an at-risk person, so I had to make a lot of changes to my lifestyle. I had to reduce contact with other people to lower the risk of contracting the virus. I also had to work on boosting my immune system, I used lots of oranges, fever grass and ginger. I was forced to stop my physical ALTA classes because of the lockdown and I had to stop socializing with my friends and family. I could not travel and had to cancel my gym membership. I also had to reduce visits to my elderly mother.

I had to think and plan before I left the house, change how I ran errands and the way I shopped for groceries, not to mention I had to wear masks everywhere. Every time I went out and returned home, I had to leave all my things outside to be sanitized. Every item I used had to be cleaned before it could be taken into the house.

As a wife and mother, surviving is what I know. My priority is to keep working on staying healthy. My faith on the other hand, gave me the strength to make it through each day with purpose. My message is that coronavirus is real and not a hoax. It kills. People need to realize the importance of heeding expert advice about Covid-19. We thought the world could not stop, but it did and over 1 million people died. Think about that.

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I would like future generations to know that in a matter of three months, we had to get used to wearing masks almost everywhere we went and washing our hands until they were pale. We learnt how hard it was to work from home while homeschooling our children. The next generations should use these lessons, their skill and technology to prepare for the next pandemic. We learnt to put health first. We learnt life's real priorities and how to adapt for survival.

I am focusing on finding joy in as many moments as I can. This pandemic has shown me how fickle and fragile life can be. We should not be afraid to take a chance on ourselves and our dreams. That is why I intend to surround myself with like-minded women to achieve the sort of independence that will allow me to live the life I deserve. I hope that in the next century the world is better off so if there is another outbreak of any disease, the leaders of that time could handle it with better communication and more sympathy for the poor and unfortunate people. I pray they can avoid the amount of death and tragedy we saw with Covid-19 and live in a grateful world.

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## Women in COVID

Natalie Jackson – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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My COVID story is really emotional and powerful. It all started December 8<sup>th</sup> of last year. My Grandpa passed away with Lymphoma. Our family on my mom's side was very sad.

At that time, I was living with my roommate (Denise), but it was not a good fit for me. It felt good because I enjoyed being independent, but it was hard because I needed more support. Right after that I got fired from the Grossmont movie theater because I was struggling with communication. It's been really difficult for me to find volunteer work or paid work during COVID so my only choice was to go back home to my parents. This was a heartbreaking decision.

Now, my other Grandma, on my Dad's side, has old age problems and uses a wheelchair to get around. We can't get her out for the holidays because a couple of workers at her facility tested positive for COVID. She is stuck in this lockdown. We feel devastated because my dad and his brothers can't see their mom. There is no WIFI at the facility so they can't even have virtual meetings. I miss my grandma.

I love to have a really big social life so it's extremely difficult for me to stay indoors throughout this whole experience. Lately, I've been making a couple new recipes with my Dad because he told me we should make more healthy meals. Then I share the recipe with my Food Prep class.

My whole personal experience with COVID has been emotional. Sadness for my grandmas. Heartbreak for my housing and happiness for my new cooking skills.

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## **Covid and Me**

Irma Rodrigues – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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The year 2020 is like no other in my lifetime. Barren streets lonely hearts, emptiness everywhere. Covid has attacked my body. Fever, weakness, paleness. Even my hair is a mess, as I can't lift the brush.

Looking out my first-floor window, tears come down. I have never felt so alone. As I stare out to nothingness, I hear a familiar voice, and see my granddaughter, Savannah, with her chubby cheeks hidden by a hulk mask.

“Mama are you sick? I made you a drawing. When will you be better? When can I stay with you?”

My son Gil is beside her, tall slim built, but some weight loss. He's been sick too.

“Mom, you get better. You are the matriarch of our family, the backbone that holds us together.

I'm happy to see them and sad at the same time. It's hard to breathe.

Now it's time to say goodbye, I look at Savannah; I see teary eyes. My sons' eyes water too.

They get in the car. I am grateful they came.

Covid has changed our lives, I sit and pray for them, then I pray for the world. My heart aches for us. My heart aches for the world.

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## **I Am COVID poem**

Matthew Szabo – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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I am hardworking and love making beats

I wonder how my family is

I hear beats that move faster and faster

I see my mother working too hard

I want to be successful in life

I am hard working and love making beats.

I motivate people by listening to their thoughts

I feel sad that my father is sleeping in death

I touch people's hearts

I worry about my mom being in hospital

I cried after my dad passed

I am hard working and love making beats.

I understand that my parents can't be here forever

I say that this world is going to end

I dream that I can see my father again

I try to do my best

I hope that every parent can see their children

I am hard working and love making beats

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## **My COVID Story**

Margaret Fudge – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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COVID has allowed me to go to school from home. Before that, I had to quit because of my back problems. Since COVID shutdown started, I can go to school online. People have the choice to go online or don't go to school at all.

I would like this over and done though. I want them to get a vaccine and get all the people vaccinated so we can go back to normal. But I hope they still have classes online.

My days are full. I go to school and hang out with my friends when I can. Right now I am taking four classes: Basic Education, Life Management and Career Prep, Wellness and Art. It is too much. Next semester I will drop some of my classes. At the same time, I watch the rug rats when their parents are busy. I also have to take care of myself by cooking, cleaning and chasing laundry.

I have enjoyed being at home all of the time, but it is making me crazy. I want to get out. I don't want to stay here. I don't think I have lost anything through COVID. Not anything. Well maybe some freedom.

This lockdown made me learn how to use the computer. I have learned how to hang out with my friends with a mask on and wait in line at the zoo. I have answered so many questions. You have to say no to all the questions or they won't let you in. COVID makes you learn a lot.

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## **The Best Birthday Present**

Amy Sandoval – San Diego Continuing Education ECC

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In November of 2018, I started thinking about Black Friday. Why were we beating each other up, just to get something on sale? I started thinking about all the things I was buying. All the money I was wasting. Then I heard about minimalism. Only have what you need and get rid of everything else.

Now when I purchase something with a credit card, I realize that I am under obligation to pay for it. My life is tied to it. It takes away my freedom.

So moving forward to my birthday last year, 2019. I celebrated my birthday with friends. Everyone got a good laugh out of my present. It was in a cute birthday bag, a four-pack of Charmin toilet paper. It was the perfect gift for me and my new minimalist ideas. Little did we know what a hot commodity toilet paper would become.

Then the pandemic happened. They weren't controlling the lines at stores. So when they opened the door, we all flew in like it was a true black Friday sale. I went to the back, to the toilet paper. People were fighting. They were really fighting. The store workers didn't know what to do.

But the bottom line is, I had my toilet paper thanks to my minimalism.

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## Covid 19 and Jackie

Jacqueline Valentine – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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Covid, oh Covid. March 19, 2020, 6:53pm, sitting at my desk at work. My phone rings off. I answer. It's my best friend. Hey, girl another virus hits the world. I brush it off. Yeah, we will be fine. She goes, no girl, this one is real real. Okay I'll look into it when I reach home.

Back to a regular day at work checking customers out, running lines, cause now lines are building up almost out the door. Customers talking, I overhear there will be a state shut down. Now I'm panicking, I start to look up symptoms. I get a little more information on the virus. I continue my everyday work life. Now we are wearing masks. Thinking of the whole two weeks we were without masks and I was dealing with customers face to face. I start to think do I have this virus. I stress, start to feel the symptoms I read about.

Now I'm out of work of work, waiting on a Covid 19 test. Got my date for my test. Now waiting on the day to come. The day is here, I drive to the site I am assigned to.

When I reach, I start to cry. I reach the part to roll my window down so I could get swabbed. Once done I feel a little better inside. As I wait for my results so I can return to work, I get a phone call from my union that they are moving my store location. So now I'm happy due to the fact my new location is close to home. Results are in now. I am negative. I thank God. I notify my boss.

New location, new position. I'm two weeks in. I love my new position. Pandemic is in effect world wide. I'm wearing a mask, washing my hands etc. I get a phone call. Hi, I'm calling you to tell you please keep Grandma in prayers. She hasn't been feeling good since this whole virus came out. Once again back to regular programing, work work. Receive another call. Listen, we have rushed Grandma to the hospital. They tested her on the spot. She is positive for Covid19. I say No, no they lying. Thank God my cousin works in the same hospital and is at her side because we can't be. 100000 people dying daily. Spoke to grandma on facetime cause they let my cousin who works there in her room. Next, three hours pass and she is gone. Covid, Oh Covid.

Healing from the pain. Its now October 25, 2020. I'm sleeping over my sister's house for a few days. I wash my hair and say I will let it air dry. Fall asleep in front of the open window. When I wake up I feel sick as if a cold is coming along. I assume it's a head cold from my hair being wet in the cold. Pay it no

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mind at work. Nose running, sweating. Home now, it's bed time. I wake to get ready for work, feel weak. I call out, stay home till I get better. Halloween comes. I go to a haunted house. I get home and feel a little better. Make it back to work. Best friend says, Take a test. I tell her I'm OK, I'm OK, I took one already.

Week goes by. I still have running nose. Cough is really bad. First Sunday of November I'm sitting at my desk. I'm typing and drip sweating for no reason. I tell my coworker. As I go to tell her how I feel, I'm gasping for air. I say, My asthma's acting up. I leave work, head home. Walking to the house, I start gasping for air. Body feels as if a truck hit me. I'm weak.

To the hospital ER. They rush me right in cause I'm gasping for air. I'm on a machine now. I'm telling them, It's not my asthma, please help. I go for x ray of my chest. On my way back, doctor comes up to me, says, We are moving you to an isolated room. We are going to test you for Covid and place you on a machine. Your oxygen is really low and keeps getting lower.

I'm on a machine now, waiting for my results. I fall asleep. I am woken up by the doctor with more treatment to help me breath and results . Jackie. you are positive for Covid 19. We are keeping you to monitor your oxygen level. Two days in the hospital. Oxygen is back to normal, I get to go home. I'm happy. Now the 14 days isolation starts. I'm ok. Headaches are bad, I'm weak, cant eat, have no taste, no smell. Losing weight. Now no one wants to be around me. I'm all alone. I start feeling like I'm gonna go crazy cause I cant go outside. I'm talking to myself.

Covid provides me with a social worker She keeps me in good sprits. Too bad I'm not getting no better at home so I have to go to a hotel studio apartment to finish my recovery. I recover after three weeks. I still get the covid headaches. Covid you try to get the best of me.

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## How Has Your Life Been This Year?

Jessica Ramos-Bahena – San Diego Continuing Education  
ECC

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I miss going to the gym and seeing my friends on the weekend. I miss the long commuting ride to San Diego State University (SDSU) on a daily basis. I miss riding the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and the long walks to get to my destination. I miss socializing with people on a daily basis and seeing them smile. I miss the world when we were free to walk around without wearing masks.

When this pandemic first started, I used to run every day before school since I would not go to the gym. My excuses to not go running are that it is too cold or that it gets dark early in the day. I misplaced my keys, so I use that as an excuse too instead of getting a replacement. I am fluctuating sizes from looking heavy to being fit with my weight. I think my weight reflects how I am feeling inside. When I am feeling down, I tend to overeat then I look a little heavy. When I am happy, I am usually well exercised and fit.

I will be graduating in August 2021! I will be receiving my Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in Three Departments: Communication, Spanish, and Counseling and School Psychology (CSP) from SDSU. I am planning on starting my Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. I am so happy and proud of myself that I got this far despite the pandemic and other challenges. Many people lost loved ones and many succeed in life due to this pandemic, they were finally able to rest.

I was mentally and physically tired from my daily routine. I needed a break from life. After I obtained my Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), I wouldn't allow myself to take a break from school since I was already behind from being hospitalized. I felt like giving up before the pandemic started. Now, I feel like this pandemic really helped me to push through with my studies. With a continuing pandemic, I have completed my classes and continue to do so.

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## Alarming Times

Mala Ramphal – Lehman College Adult Learning Center

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Surviving in the pandemic is like a dream for me. One day I went to class at about 6:30 pm and all my classmates were there doing their math class work. Our teacher Miss Vanessa was also there. She was checking everyone's homework and had them take out their math work for her to look at. As I walked into class I saw her looking at Florence's work. Florence was one of my classmates in Math. She was very intelligent and always asked questions in class.

“Go sit and I will come to you,” Miss Vanessa said as she looked up at me.

I did as I was told and went to sit in a seat that was empty. As I was looking in my bookbag for my math book, I sensed that something was wrong. I noticed that the classroom was extremely quiet today – more than before but before my mind could process why it was so quiet, all of a sudden I heard this big noise like a big bang! Everyone in my class stopped what they were doing and looked at the classroom door.

“I will go take a look and come right back,” Miss Vanessa said as she quickly went outside of the classroom closing the door behind her.

All my classmates became curious and they wanted to know what was going on. One student from another class came running into our class 3 minutes after Miss Venessa went out. She stopped and put her hands on her heart and began panting and breathing hard.

“Everyone is leaving because some individuals in the school have Covid-19. My teacher said that school won't be open until we hear from the higher ups ,” she explained after she calmed down.

As soon as everyone in my class heard what happened some of my classmates picked up their stuff and ran out of the classroom while me and some of the others waited until the teacher came back to the class.

After 5 minutes I saw Miss Vanessa walking into the classroom and I quickly went up to her.

“How are we going to have classes now that school isn't going to be opened soon?” I asked in panic, with everyone else curious to know the answer.

“Give me your emails and I would let you know if anything changes. The higher ups might find some other way to have classes that doesn't involve going into the classroom,” she said to us as she passes a book and pen for us to write our emails onto.

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“Thank you,” I said after writing my email onto the notebook and I picked up my backpack and walked out the classroom, closing the door behind me.

On my way home I was thinking, is this covid-19 really that dangerous? I took out my phone from my pocket and called my aunt to tell her what happened. I told her how chaotic it was and how almost everyone ran out of school. She told me that she looked at the news and how Covid-19 isn't going to be stopping anytime soon and that I should go outside less than before because I might be diagnosed with it if I keep going outside. I told her I would be careful and I went to the bus stop and got onto the bus with a gut feeling that things aren't getting back to the good times anytime soon.



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## Covid 19 Made Many Differences

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My son and I became one. We wake up together, we eat together, we take showers together, and we sleep together. Being with someone you love, must be the happiest thing you experience. However, to tell the truth, it is really tough. The toughest thing I ever experienced. It might be because I have nowhere to go. I have no place to go. Even church is having services online. Even if I go out with my son, I kept being afraid that my son will touch some dirty surface where there might be covid-19 virus.

If there's no Covid-19, I could find friends for my son and let them play together. He could spend his time at daycare center, while I am spending my time; reading books, studying English, going to church and socializing, and preparing for a job, etc. I could also take a flight to visit my mom and dad, they will surely enjoy meeting their grandson for the first time. We can also go shop for groceries, or go to water parks and enjoy the surroundings together. However, things are different now. I am a homebound mother now. This discouraged me a lot. To make things worse, the long winter of Chicago came. I could not even go out to take a walk with my son, because I kept being afraid that he may get a cough. I could not go out and could not do anything, I suffered from insomnia and depression because of stress. Everything is in the dark in the Covid-19 situation.

I decided to take one step forward to find hope to change the situation I faced. Like, there's a saying "When Life gives you lemons, make lemonade".

There are many things that I appreciate so much. I joined a job readiness class and met a good caring teacher and fellow students. Dreaming of working again, I updated my resume, CV and practiced interview skills. Those people I met during class encouraged me a lot.

I started being tutored in English and met a great teacher. She's full of enthusiasm and I am learning many things from her, including grammar, idioms, and expressions. This makes me really happy that I can invest my own time to improve my English skills during these difficult times.

Friends and neighbors have stopped by my place and dropped off some food they cooked. It seems that Covid-19 made us social distance but it could not stop people from sharing. It could not stop people being kind to each other. Rather, it proved that life on earth is still beautiful because of those people living daily at their best effort, with love.

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I could stand up and overcome these difficulties because those people supported and encouraged me.

Eventually, the long winter has gone and Spring has come, so I can go out to take a walk with my son under the Sun.







*Caroline Wang, "Year of the Golden Ox"*

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## **Writing Tips and Checklists**

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## General Tips for Student Writers

By Donna Jones

Donna Jones is a student leader who also loves to write. She has developed a workshop by students for students called "Writer to Writer." Donna was an Honors Award winner for *Women's Perspectives #1* for her essay "Better Self Esteem Can Create Better Health." She has participated on the Selection Committee since 2006. These are her suggestions for student writers who want to participate in *Women's Perspectives*.

### **There are 3 parts to writing.**

#### **Prewriting: a stage for collecting everything together**

1. A good thing to think about before even getting started is to make a list of reasons for sending your writing to *Women's Perspectives*.
  - a. List the type of things that will stop you from sending in your entry. Sometimes when things get hard or people get upset with a project, they quit. I don't want to see this happen to you.
  - b. Now list what you will do if one of these problems does happen.
  - c. You can keep adding to these lists. Please don't let anything get in your way.
2. Pick the right time of day and place to do your writing.
3. Your brain is a muscle and it needs to get warmed up. This exercise will loosen it up: Just write whatever pops into your head. You can use a computer or paper. Remember your writing doesn't have to make sense or be correct. You can write, "I can't think of anything to write or I hate this exercise." Just keep the words flowing for 3 - 5 minutes.
4. Keep a notebook & pen handy during the day to write down ideas and thoughts. Also keep it by your bed at night.
5. Get all the things together that you will need for this project before you start to write (paper, pens, erasers, dictionary, thesaurus). So you won't have an excuse to stop.

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## GENERAL WRITING TIPS

### **Writing: a stage of organizing things and putting them down on paper**

1. Review your notes. Remember you don't have to use all of them.
2. Always have a good opening sentence or paragraph. Something that will get your readers to want to read more of your writing.
3. Write from your heart. BE HONEST! Write how you feel. If you feel like crying then make your readers want to cry. Get your readers to react to your story.
4. Your last paragraph is as important as your first paragraph. You want your readers walking away remembering what you wrote. Don't leave them guessing. Remember how a good ending makes the movie good and a bad ending can ruin it.

### **Editing: a stage for making sentences stronger through tidying grammar and providing additional details to engage readers' attention**

1. Put your story away for at least 24 hours. Then take it out, stand in front of a mirror and read it aloud. While reading it, ask yourself: does sound clear, does it make sense, did I put a comma where I took a breath? These spots are not always where commas go.
2. Give it to your teacher or tutor to correct it.
3. Give it to a different person to read. Someone, who you haven't talked to about this writing. Also, give her the call to write from WE LEARN. Ask her, "Does my writing make sense, does it fit the topic?" Ask: "How did you react when you were reading it?"
4. It may take several rewriting sessions before you get it the right way.
5. Most Importantly: Don't give up!!!!!!
6. Be sure to make a copy of what you wrote and file it away. It is something you should be proud of.

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## FINISHING YOUR WORK FOR PUBLICATION

Each year, WE LEARN receives many writings to consider for publication in *Women's Perspectives*. It is not possible for us to print them all, so the selection committee reads each writing very carefully. We make our selections based on the finished quality of the work (grammar, spelling, etc.). More importantly, though, we consider the "voice" of the student writers.

- Has the student writer told us something from her/his unique perspective or experience?
- Has the writer clearly expressed an opinion or told an interesting story or helped the reader to come to some new ideas or understanding?
- Has the writer thoughtfully addressed the theme?

We suggest that students share their writing with student colleagues. Perhaps students can create a peer-writing and editing group. Here are some steps to take in such a group.

1. Read your writing to your peer group.
2. "Interview" the listeners (students in the peer group). The writer should ask the listeners the questions, but not respond. The listeners should answer as full as they can in the moment. Here are some sample questions:
  - a. What words or phrases stood out to you? (Just the words, not the meanings)
  - b. What message did you hear?
  - c. What were you thinking or feeling when you heard this writing?
3. The writer can then listen to these ideas and make changes or re-write the piece according to the comments in order to make it closer to what the writer wants to say.

You can find other suggestions for peer editing work in Peter Elbow's book *Writing with Power* or Louise Dunlap's book *Undoing the Silence*.

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We have created checklists to assist writers in creating quality writing worthy of publishing. In addition to the categories on grammar, there is a section for interest. While writing may be technically correct, it is important to note that the *Women's Perspectives* Committee must evaluate the "publish-ability" of a work. Consider these questions:

- Is it interesting or original?
- Would someone want to read this?

The hope of the committee is that students will use these checklists (one for essays, stories, and memoir, the other for poetry) to edit and prepare their writing for publication. Students may also want to ask a teacher or tutor about other kinds of writing rubrics they could use. A rubric is a set of guidelines used to rate goals or accomplishments.

### **Women's Perspectives Writer's Checklist: Essay/Memoir**

#### INTEREST

1. Does the writing address the theme for *Women's Perspectives*? YES/ NO
2. Is the topic interesting? YES/NO
3. Is the topic original? YES/ NO
4. Has the writer expressed something unique about the topic? YES/ NO
5. Are there enough details to paint a picture for the reader? YES/ NO
6. Are descriptive or rich words and vocabulary used to express thoughts? YES/ NO
7. Is the reader encouraged towards reflection? YES/ NO
8. *If applicable to the writing*, can the reader identify or feel the writer's emotions? YES/ NO
9. *If this is expository writing*, can the reader understand or be challenged by the writer's opinion or point of view? YES/NO

#### STRUCTURE/GRAMMAR

1. Are sentences complete? YES/ NO
2. Are words spelled correctly? YES/ NO
3. *If applicable*, are paragraphs clearly defined? YES/ NO
4. Are the thoughts organized clearly and in a logical manner? YES/ NO

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5. Is there sentence variety? YES/ NO
  6. Is the correct punctuation used? YES/NO

### **Women's Perspectives Writer's Checklist: Poetry**

#### INTEREST

1. Does the writing address the theme *Women's Perspectives*? YES/ NO
2. Is the topic interesting? YES/ NO
3. Is the topic original? YES/ NO
4. Has the writer expressed something unique about the topic? YES/NO
5. Are there enough details to paint a picture for the reader? YES/ NO
6. Are descriptive or rich words and vocabulary used to express thoughts? YES/NO
7. Can the reader identify or feel the writer's emotions? YES/NO
8. Is the reader encouraged towards reflection? YES/NO

#### FORM/FORMAT

1. Can the writing be identified as a poem? YES/ NO
2. *If applicable*, does the poem properly use the stated form (e.g., Haiku) YES/ NO
3. Are words spelled correctly? YES/NO
4. Are the thoughts organized clearly and in a meaningful manner? YES/ NO
5. Does the poem flow? YES/ NO

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The impact of seeing your words in print is powerful. Adult learners need as many of those opportunities as possible. Student publishing is central to the mission of WE LEARN. We are proud of *Women's Perspectives*, proud to give learners the space to share their ideas, learn from one another, strengthen their confidence in their voices.

You're reading this journal, so we know that lifting up student voices is important to you, too. We ask that you help keep *Women's Perspectives* going by donating to WE LEARN.

**[DONATE TO WE LEARN](#)**

Board member Shellie Walters is an adult learner. Her inspiring words stand as the introduction to this journal. We'll close with her words, too:

*As a student I became a member of WE LEARN and then wrote for Women's Perspectives. The confidence I got from being a member led me to getting my AA degree. I would encourage everyone to donate or become a member of this organization to help others like me accomplish their dreams.*