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UA94/6/1 COVID-19 Diary

Daniel Myers

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My name is Daniel Myers, I am 19 years old, but I was 18 when the Coronavirus spread to the United States, and I am a sophomore at Western Kentucky University. I love playing sports, food, and spending time with my family and friends. I expect these things are typical of college guys. This past spring, the world as we knew experienced a drastic change as the result of a new super-virus called Covid-19. The virus began in China during the late fall of 2019, but rapidly spread across the globe to all countries. The United States confirmed its first case sometime in early 2020, but I am not exactly sure when. I remember getting a phone call from my mother on one of the first days of March. She told me that Nashville, Tennessee had just confirmed its first case of Covid. As Western Kentucky University is only about an hour north of Nashville along interstate 65, she was worried for my safety, as I am sure most mothers were for their children. At that point, nobody knew the impact that this virus would have on the US, nor the effects it would have on the entire world.

I went home on March 6th for spring break. My sister's birthday was that day so I wanted to see her when she turned 12. During this time, Covid was running rampant in Italy and the nation was under complete lockdown. I, along with most people I know, assumed that the virus would not impact us the same way, as our healthcare is esteemed and the United States has historically been able to fight off threats. Unfortunately, this assumption was incorrect. Shortly after going home for spring break, the university extended our time off due to the threat of the virus. I drove the 3 hours back to campus to grab some clothing from my dorm. When I returned home that evening, I was excited to have some extra time with my family. A few days later, the university announced that students would not be returning to campus for classes the rest of the semester and would instead, have professors teach online classes for the remainder of the academic year. My father and I drove back to my dorm to move me out completely. That was exciting, but also sad because I knew I would miss my friends and being on campus, but I was also glad to be with my family.

Online classes began and ran smoothly, although more difficult than in-seat, due to it being more difficult to keep up with online assignments. Kentucky governor, Andy Beshear closed the state and began encouraging mask usage and social distancing. By this point, I already missed my friends, but I was not worried because Americans expected the virus to disappear after a couple months. May ended up coming and I celebrated my birthday without any of my friends. I was with my family, but I had the chance during the school year to celebrate my friends' birthdays with them, so it was sad to be by myself. The US quickly became the global hot-spot for the Coronavirus, partly due to poor leadership and partially due to the fact that many Americans denied the existence of the virus, refused to wear masks, and also refused to socially distance. Currently, the United States had over 6 million Coronavirus cases and nearly 200,000 deaths. This ranks us as the absolute worst place in the entire world to be, during this global pandemic. I hope that things turn around soon and our leadership wises up, otherwise, there will be many more deaths.

August 28, 2020

I arrived back at college for the first time since the spring, last on August 14th. Although classes do not start until the 24th, I came back early because I am a member of the Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM) and I had training for being a freshman bible study leader, last week. I have just finished my first week of classes and I am excited for the weekend! This semester I am taking Intermediate Arabic 201, Intermediate French 201, Honor's 251, History 306, and Econ. 375. I know the semester is going to be extremely busy and full of homework, but I am excited for all of my classes.

As of now, I have not been diagnosed with Covid, although most of my family a mystery illness earlier this year. We suspect that we may have had the virus already. As of now, medical professionals say that a previously infected Covid person has up to 3 months of resistance and antibodies against a re-infection.

It was great to see my friends last week, as well! They all met up earlier in the summer to hang out, but I was busy that day, so the last time I saw any of them was March 6th. I also was glad to get to go back to the BCM. The restrictions are quite strict, however. Upon entering the building, we have our temperature checked and must sign in so that there is a record of who comes in and goes out.

I know several people who have had Covid and they all have experienced it differently. One of my close friends had the virus two weeks before classes. She said that it caused her to have a slight headache and some congestion for a few days. Another of my friends has Coronavirus, but is in the hospital. I also know someone who was completely asymptomatic, so it appears that the virus affects everyone differently.

October 3, 2020

Now is certainly a tough time on campus, as we all prepare for midterm exams. The last few weeks have been challenging, especially in my French and Arabic classes. I had my first oral exam of the semester in French and that went surprisingly well, considering the fact that no matter how hard I work or how much I study, I always feel behind in the class and the content challenges me. I think this is probably a common feeling for someone who is learning a foreign language. Honestly, I appreciate learning languages now, more than ever. I feel that a big part of this is because I have felt a general lack of communication among people in the world and especially the U.S. during this time of great uncertainty. The major factor that contributes to this feeling is definitely the political field. The right and left wings are at potentially the greatest odds of the 21st century, and most definitely are the most divided that I can remember. This is unexplainably discouraging, as when the country needs the best leadership from both sides, it seems as if no body will take control, nobody will take blame, and everyone wants to take credit for the accomplishments of others. This is especially noticeable when the President undermines the advice and research of experts. I know that many people will disagree with this statement, but Dr. Fauci, the head of the United States' battle against COVID, deserves so much more recognition than he has received. The President has continually called him, essentially, a fool and undermined the authority of the man who has dedicated decades to the study and fight against diseases and viruses. It is so discouraging because there are no answers during this time, but many falsify claims and argue points that contradict everything that disease experts assert. In

addition to this being discouraging, this is an extremely sad occurrence, because it is 2020 and one would expect that the decently educated people of the nation would not follow a foolish leader, as if they were sheep. Sometimes I feel like Americans simply want to argue. This is apparent in the political climate, social climate, and even within the modern family, I notice.

I still have not had COVID, at least, if I have, it was asymptomatic. I do, however, have several friends who are currently battling the virus. None of them are in a critical state, but it is worrying nonetheless. I found out that my grandmother has tested positive a couple days ago, but luckily, she shows no symptoms as of yet. It is concerning that she has the virus because she has to be around the age of 80. I am not exactly sure, to tell the truth, and she is in the nursing home because my grandfather was unable to attend to her declining health. Her name is Nadine and she is in the later stages of Alzheimers, so she cannot recognize her family members, she cannot eat, and she cannot talk. The hope I do have, though, is that she is incredibly feisty! She is well known to have a temper and will fight doctors and nurses, despite her state of health. When my dad told me that she had tested positive, I responded saying, "if she can kick anyone's butt, why is covid any different?" I think humor is an essential part of surviving this challenging time.

October 6, 2020

I just discovered that the BCM, in which I am quite active, has been closed due to COVID. Two members of the BCM have contracted the virus, so the organization was forced to close. This is a major disappointment to everyone who is active in the BCM, because we all spend a lot of time there. I think that spending time there is a good way to cope with the uncertainty and stress of this time. Of course, we socially distance and wear face masks when inside the building, but the building is still closed until the 19th. Most of my friends are members of the BCM, so when we all discovered that it was closing, we immediately began trying to think of other ways to occupy our time. I still am healthy, but I have been notified twice that I may have been exposed to COVID. Normally, I would get tested right away, but I was told that I had simply been in the same building as an infected individual within the last two weeks. This seems like little reason to get tested, but I am trying to stay socially distant from others and I am monitoring my symptoms to determine if I should seek medical guidance. Calculated risks are the only thing that we know anymore. Here on campus, everyone must wear a mask when in groups and when indoors, but back in my town, it is rare to see more than a handful of people wearing masks at the store or any other businesses. The governor has mandated that we must wear masks in public, but what good is a rule if it is not enforced? That is the golden question, and one which I feel too many people are testing. Kentucky has just surpassed its worst COVID day yet, which is a terrible occasion. It seems that things can get only better from here, but unfortunately that is just not the case. Things can get much worse, but I try to stay optimistic. Technically I should probably be more worried for my own safety than I am, though, as I am a person at an increased risk. I am a type one Diabetic, but I have had this condition for long enough that I feel that I can handle the challenges that the virus may bring.

I have been considering how social media has affected the view points of people during this time. I have noticed that it has played a larger role than I had previously expected. The main thing I have noticed is that social media has been a catalyst for the spread of misinformation regarding the Covid pandemic. It has also been used to spread misinformation about the

Presidential election, which I actually voted in today! This was my first time to vote and I was so excited! Unfortunately, I did not go to a poll, but instead voted by absentee ballot. This is slightly anticlimactic, but I am fulfilling my civic duty. I have watched the only presidential debate which has already occurred. Whether more debates will commence is in question, as President Trump and The First Lady have both been diagnosed with the virus. Of course, my opinion and vote cannot be swayed at this point, but I think that many people are uninformed right now, and I hope that a chance to watch the debate(s) may be helpful in making an informed decision. It is surprising how many of my fellow university students have absolutely no idea about what is at stake with this election and do not even understand the critical issues at hand. This is considered an unusually important election, as it may determine the outcome of this pandemic. Also, next year is the redrawing of jerry mandering lines, as I understand it, which will give a distinct advantage to the side who draws them, for the next 10 years. 10 years is a very long time, so I can only hope that everyone makes informed decisions in the election and whatever is best for this country prevails.

October 17, 2020

Today is Saturday and this has been such a long week. One of my friends feared that she had COVID and got tested. Luckily, she tested negative, so none of us have to quarantine. I had several tests this week, some of which were midterms. This part of the semester is always difficult because work begins to pile up and we begin preparations for our big exams. The BCM (Baptist Campus Ministry) opens on Monday and we are all excited for that. I teach a bible study for the freshmen and meeting online is just more difficult. I think part of the reason for this is that it is not as personable or engaging doing discussions online.

October 23, 2020

What a busy weekend I have planned. My brother has his region cross country meet, which I am going to attend tomorrow. I am interested to see how it is set up according to COVID guidelines. It will be great to see my family though, as it has been nearly three months since I have been home. I will not even be going home, but at least I will see my family tomorrow. This week has been tough. I have been taking my midterms and homework and projects are beginning to pile up before the end of the semester. I hope I will have some time to get a lot of work finished this weekend after I return to campus.

It is now Monday and I watched my brother's meet. We had to distance at the finish line and could not crowd the athletes or onlookers. Also, the coaches had to distribute the medals and trophies, instead of the runners, who could do it themselves last year.

October 31, 2020

Today is Halloween! I cannot believe it is this time of year again. Just one year ago, nobody knew anything about the coronavirus. About this time, there was a mysterious illness in China, but few Americans knew anything about it. It is crazy how fast it spread and took over the world. I hear that nearly 250,000 Americans have died from COVID so far. This seems outrageous and incredibly needless, as other countries such as New Zealand and South Korea nearly eradicated the virus early into the pandemic. I cannot help but believe that this is all because of poor leadership in our nation. Hopefully some things will change soon. The

presidential election is next week, and whichever side wins, I can only hope that some changes will occur and this health crisis will be taken more seriously. The bad thing is, we all complain about lack of leadership and initiative, but honestly, even if I were in a position of power, I do not know how I would approach tackling this virus. I guess I would enforce wearing masks and distancing. I heard that in South Korea, when someone tested positive, they were forced to stay home, but the government issued them a care package with two weeks of cleaning supplies and food. This seems like a good idea to me. I know people who test positive and still hesitate to quarantine. I think that if quarantine was enforced, possibly the spread of COVID could be minimized, especially if masks and social distancing were enforced as well. Tonight I will be joining a few of my friends at an escape room. I am curious what the restrictions will be there. I expect that masks and social distancing will be mandatory. We may also have to disinfect the room and use hand sanitizer before and after the activities, as well. I am on an intramural soccer team this semester as well. It is definitely less fun this year because there are less players allowed on the field at a time.

November 7, 2020

It has been such a long week. The election was on the 3rd and the future of our nation has remained undecided. This morning it was announced that Joe Biden has won the election and will become the 46th president of the United States of America. I am interested to see what happens in the upcoming 4 years. Actually, I am incredibly interested to see what happens from now until the inauguration in January of 2021. It is undebatable that the current president, Donald Trump is a sore loser. He is in the process of suing multiple states on the basis of voter fraud. This would not be such a bad thing if there were any substantial evidences pointing towards an actual crime, but there is none. There is also an anticipated recount of votes in at least one state. This only makes sense, as it would be terrible for a counting error to be the cause of an election's results. I expect that nothing will change, though. Many Americans are still blaming the Coronavirus on the Democratic Party. I have actually seen the prediction that as soon as the election was over, Covid would completely disappear. This is absolute ignorance, if you ask me. It is impossible for a political party to trick millions of people into believing a fake illness exists, especially when so many people have actually been sick. I know multiple people that have had covid and none of them debate its existence. Actually, my grandmother was diagnosed with covid a few weeks ago. She lives in the nursing home and has late-stage dementia and was already on assisted oxygen. I found out earlier this week that she recovered from Covid and is healthy! It is amazing what God can do. Unfortunately, some people in my situation would simply give credit of the recovery to the fact that Covid simply does not exist. How foolish. The World around us is suffering, yet still, some believe it is a grand hoax. I cannot express how discouraging it is to have these people make up such a large proportion of my nation's citizens. I guess hope for a better future is all we have. And perhaps a bit of common sense for those in need of it.

November 16, 2020

Today is Monday and it feels just like one. I went hiking over the weekend in Tennessee with a group of friends from the BCM. Luckily, as we were outside the entirety of the trip, but in the car, masks were not mandatory. I was not concerned about wearing a mask because we were

in the woods and we were all just kind of walking along. It wasn't like anyone was giving piggyback rides or anything. Although I and my friends did not wear a mask while hiking, I did notice that a few people did. I was kind of surprised, but at the same time, being cautious in a time like this cannot be a bad thing. I hope that these people were not uncomfortable with the fact that nobody else was wearing a mask. Of course, the BCM closely monitors who is present at activities and events, so if any of the people who went become ill with COVID, all the others who were present will be alerted. This weekend I will go home for Thanksgiving Break! It is the first time I have been home this entire semester. The last time I was home was the morning of August 11 before I moved into my dorm on campus. I expect that I will get a covid test later this week as an added layer of protection of my family. If I am positive for the virus, I will stay on campus and quarantine in one of the dorms. I really hope that I do not get sick though, as I have heard that the living conditions are very difficult to endure. One of my friends who was quarantined a couple months ago told me that had his mother not brought a care package with food to him before his quarantine, he would have likely starved. He was only quarantined for 10 days because he was only exposed and never tested positive. According to him, the food situation was the most difficult part of the entire quarantine, besides boredom. Tonight I have my semifinal intramural co-rec soccer game. The weather will be cooler than it has been the last few weeks. I am extremely excited because intramural sports are a lot of fun to me. It is only 10 people on the field at a time, and we must wear masks when not playing, so I suppose that as much as possible is being done to prevent the spread of the virus. I received an update this morning that Kentucky is in a very bad spot, regarding new covid cases. We top over 1,000 each day and usually have double digit deaths daily as well. This is working, as our governor has been one of the most strict as far as mask enforcement and health standards go. The bad thing is that there are still states that do not take this pandemic seriously and the cases there are extremely high. I hope that this will all come to an end soon. Last week, Pfizer announced that it has developed a covid vaccine that is effective at preventing covid in 90% of people who get immunized. This is certainly promising, but unfortunately it takes forever for any new medications to be approved by the FDA and get onto the market to become widely available. Experts predict it will be at least the upcoming spring of 2021 before any vaccine is readily available for use nationwide.

November 24, 2020

I have finally come home from university and I am so glad to see my family. It is Tuesday and I have really enjoyed this relaxing weekend. Yesterday I went shopping with my father for Christmas gifts. We drove to Knoxville, Tennessee. It was odd seeing how few people wore masks in public there. I know that masks are mandated in Knoxville, but fewer people wore masks there than in Bowling Green. I also found out that there have been more covid cases in the nursing home where my grandmother lives. Luckily, she has had covid already and has recovered, so she is at little risk of re-contracting the virus. Also, the Kentucky governor, Andy Beshear, has declared that all universities are to completely transition onto online classes, so no more of my classes will be in person this year. This coming weekend I will be returning to campus for my final week of virtual classes and finals the week after. Following finals, I will come back home until around late January, when classes begin again. My family is taking a

skiing vacation the first week of January, so I am really looking forward to that. Also, some of my friends from the BCM are taking a ski trip in mid-January, so I may participate in that as well. I love skiing, but do not often get the chance to, as I do not live close to any ski resorts. There is a small ski slope/ skiing park about 4 hours away, but my family goes to West Virginia to ski. It is about a 12 hour drive, so we do not go often. I wonder what the covid restrictions will be like there. I can think of one good thing about all this virus stuff, though: I can wear a mask when it is cold and nobody will judge me. I guess that is a good thing. Had I seen a picture of the nation as it is today, last year, I do not know what I would have thought. I would have probably thought the world was ending. Thankfully, it has not ended yet.

November 28, 2020

It has been such a good week with my family. Thanksgiving was great. Unfortunately only the people in my house were in attendance. Not even my grandparents joined us and they live in the same town. The governor asked everyone to keep Thanksgiving celebrations small and to not invite lots of people. My family does its best to follow the guidelines even though we miss seeing our extended family and friends. Yesterday we went and got a Christmas tree. We always get a live one. They smell so good. It is probably one of my favorite parts of the Christmas season. We also decorated the house for Christmas yesterday. I plan on going back to campus tomorrow for my last week of classes and my week of finals. I know that we are not supposed to go back and forth from home to school, but I have only been home once this semester and my family is very cautious, so I think it will be alright this time. When I come home next, I will not be returning to campus until classes start on January 19. I still do not know how we are planning on celebrating Christmas this year, though. I wonder if at least my grandparents will join us. I sure hope to see them soon. I also miss being around my friends in my hometown. I am used to seeing my university friends all the time, so it is odd not being able to see my other friends often. I hope that my last week of classes and finals goes well. I still have a few projects and papers to finish, so I will be super busy this next week. I also will teach my last bible study for the semester on Monday, so hopefully that goes well.

December 4, 2020

This is my final entry in my covid diary. I will be sending this to the WKU archives so that posterity can hopefully learn from my experiences during this pandemic. Today, I finished classes for the semester. Next week is finals week. Then I will go home and not return to campus until mid/late January. I can only hope that there will be a widely-available vaccine by then. Supposedly, a vaccine will be available for high-priority people in the next couple of weeks. I expect this means health care workers, politicians, and possibly nursing home patients. I hope that it becomes available to the general public soon, though. My grandparents are waiting for a vaccination and they will not rest soundly until they have been immunized. I would love to spend Christmas with them, but unless they receive the vaccination, I do not think they will join my family for the festivities. I know that many of the people around me, including my friends, have had similar experiences to the pandemic as I have. I hope that I have provided enough information and insight into this year's occurrences that whoever reads this, if anyone, will gain at least some understanding of what the world is going through right now. Before closing, I do

Daniel Myers

need today that although life is drastically different now than it was a year ago for me, I and my family and friends have been incredibly fortunate and blessed to not face the struggles that many millions of people around the world are facing. For that, I can thank only God.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Myers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

-Daniel Myers