[Title]: “Photo and Text, My Hobby and Covid19”
[Author]: Naoki Yamaguchi
[Date Received]: March 23, 2021



[Text]: This is a film photo of myself wearing a young men’s novelty suit from the 1910s with a Spanish Flu-era facemask taken on an Ica Icarette (c. 1912~1918). Portrayals of historical time periods through my collection of clothing, cameras, and architectural photography has always been a hobby that I am passionate about, and the pandemic gave me an opportunity to further excel in this hobby. This photo embodies what this pandemic meant to me in many ways. First, the film itself is very poorly processed, and dusty. This is because I was feeling mentally down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I did not feel like putting as much effort into the whole process of doing what I love and wearing what I love, which normally includes me meticulously following developing guidelines for photos and cleaning the images for a final product of a very clear and clean image. Second, the photo itself reflects the Covid-19 pandemic for me. It is a contrast between 1918 and 2020. The out-of-focus backdrop of the photograph is on stairways that were built prior to 1918, around 1908 from what I gathered. It existed during the Pandemic of 1918 and was neglected throughout the ages up to today as the photo shows weathering and destruction. A more focused image of myself in the period’s attire reminded me that while history slowly fades away without any kind of attention, like the background stairs, it is the job and responsibility of historians to keep the memories and perspectives of the Pandemic of 1918 alive, as I tried to with my interpretation of an individual from that era. Living through a pandemic right now ourselves gives us the responsibility of documenting the pandemic so that the later generations will have an abundance of material to study. By doing so, the history of Covid-19 will not fade into obscurity like the stairways, a memory of the distant past that no one pays attention to.

[Title]: "[Untitled]"
[Author]: (Anonymous)
[Date Received]: April 8, 2021



[Text]:
I passed security and wandered throughout the desolate terminal. The sea of empty seats punched me in the gut. Only a handful of gate agents stood by. Signs plastered every inch of the terminal, reminding the few travelers to wear a mask, social distance, and follow proper hand-washing etiquette. Airports usually bustled with frantic flyers, tired flight crews, and rolling luggage. Now the airport stood frozen in silence. I never thought I'd see an empty airport; it scared me. My stomach growled as I passed all the closed restaurants and coffee shops. I don't know if it's from hunger or that my final essay was due tomorrow. Even if it was from hunger, I didn't have any money. All I had was my mask, a few clothes, a backpack full of library books, and a half-written essay.

While many people condemned those who travel during a pandemic, I had no choice. My drunk father kicked me out. The government ordered everyone to be "safer at home," but it's not safe in an abusive household. You're always scared, stressed, and anxious. You can't even sleep because the slightest noise makes you jump in fear. You hide underneath a silly blanket because you think it's going to protect you. People complained about how they're bored at their house, but I just wanted to feel safe. I can usually tolerate the eruptive episodes, but countless days of it made my tolerance dwindle. I couldn't take it anymore. Before I knew it, I was on the streets with nothing: no shoes, no money, no birth certificate, no social security card, no mask. The neighbor had to bring me shoes and my backpack.

It's about to be a year since it happened. I managed to find refuge, turned in my final essay, and rebuild my life. Although the pandemic separates us, so many people reached out to help me. Friends opened their doors despite the pandemic. Their families provided me a bed, fed me even when money was tight, and celebrated my birthday. The pandemic rages on, but life continues. Virtual funerals commemorate loved ones, while virtual weddings celebrate a couple's love. Graduating seniors close a chapter while incoming freshmen embark on a new adventure. And for me, I lost a family but regained a new one.

[Title]: “Missing My Mom”
[Author]: Anonymous
[Date Received]: April 22, 2021



[Text]: I've heard a few people say I ain't afraid of covid, it hits different when it hits home. Still so unreal my mom really passed away. Take care of your familyit’s really a bad time to be sick in the hospital or pass away (it always is). Just with Covid around you can't visit your family member at the hospital to tell them it's going to be OK, hold their hand. It’s a really lonely death. Funerals are backed up for months this is an ongoing nightmare. Thank you mom for always being the guide I needed and for the sacrifices. My life hasn't been the same without you.

[Title]: "[Untitled]"
[Author]: Sophia Franchesca Miranda
[Date Received]: April 25, 2021
[Text]:

On top of the many deaths that were happening around the world, my parents' unemployment, and the transition from high school into my first year of college, the biggest challenge that I had to face during this pandemic was finding out a late diagnosis of my mom's stage four cancer. For a short period of time, it was hard for me to express my emotions because such news made it difficult to comprehend all of the change that had been happening. My mom's disease took a toll on our entire family and I had to take on many more responsibilities. Because of this, I began to lose motivation in the things that I loved and the things that I found to be important. Although the pandemic has put a pause on all of our lives, I would have to say that it pushed me to become a better daughter, student, and friend. It taught me to be grateful for the things that I had before the pandemic and the things that I still have now. The main lesson that I learned was that people can choose to be happy because they are the only ones who can control that.

[Title]: "[Untitled]"
[Author]: Erika Ortega
[Date Received]: April 27, 2021
[Text]:

The pandemic for most of us began March 2020 due to the fact everything officially shut down and we needed to quarantine. Everything changed especially my job because my job consisted of teaching in a crowded classroom, but that crowded classroom became a computer screen. At first, everything was hard because things were changing rapidly and things were getting worse. The two weeks of quarantine soon became 3 months, 6 months and officially more than a year has passed and the pandemic is not over yet.

Covid 19 exposed the realities of being a low-income person of color. For instance, people were losing their jobs and getting sick/dying at a higher rate due to being essential workers and not having proper access to healthcare. Students did not have internet access, students felt the need to work because parents were losing their jobs. It was horrible…

Covid-19 did not hit everyone the same especially if you were on the "privilege" side. I have to admit I was on the "privilege side". Being on this side felt weird because this country has never treated my family kindly. I say this because my parents are undocumented immigrants from Mexico and yes, they are essential workers, but thankfully we (6 siblings) are older and we were able to easily help our parents make ends meets. If we had been underage, we would have been, fucked. There is no way around it.

For the summer of 2020, I had a trip planned to Europe and it got cancelled due to the pandemic. I was upset, but I learned to enjoy this "new normal". I also felt guilty, yet thankful because being in a privilege side was foreign and contradictory for me. I felt as if I did not deserved to be in the position I was in. I also felt this "privilege" is too good to be true. I felt anything could happen so I decided to make my hobby into a "little business" porque uno nunca sabe one never knows. Additionally, I was thankful for having comfort of being at home; I was not driving as much, had time for hobbies, workouts, hikes, cook etc. It was an oddly interesting time that I enjoyed.

Lastly, one of the biggest challenges I faced was knowing people who were falling into the cracks of conspiracy theories. I had cousins, friends and a boyfriend who became obsessed in conspiracy theories. According to my boyfriend of that time (Estevan*), everyone was a sheep because they complied with wearing a mask etc. Estevan* turned into a Trump supporter and was very cult like and it was very scary to see. He would talk/post about conspiracy theories 24/7. That was when I decided to part ways from him. However, although I disagree with him I have learned to understand his perspective because for some of us Covid was something we only heard about in the news… I very much knew Covid was real because many of my students had family in the hospital, students were getting sick with Covid, had families that passed away due to Covid. My ex did not care nor understood the privilege we had. However, early this year through a friend of his, I found out, Estevan* ended up getting Covid and got extremely sick.

In a time of pandemic, we also had police violence and people rising up against a racist police force. People were not only defending one person, but were demanding to defund the police force, which is amazing. In a time of resistance, we also normalized social justice discussions in the classroom, but I still feel we are not doing a good job at because the majority of my coworkers/teachers leading these conversations are white gentrifies. They should not be talking about BLM when they are still part of the problem.

[Title]: **"**Loss, Mourning and Reconciliation During the COVID-19 2020 Global Pandemic"
[Author]: Monica Valenzuela
[Date Received]: April 29, 2021
[Text]:

April 6th 2020 was a tragic event that I now refer to as "that day." As I condense the events of what happened into two words the actual events that took place and the trauma that I suffered are far from the compartmentalization of two words. I lost my friend that day who I had known since we were teenagers and who I considered one of my closest friends. The experience of losing a loved one fills one with a myriad of emotions and at the same time leaves an emptiness. The 2020 global pandemic has forced us to face our worst fears and as difficult and personal as our individual experiences have been, this disaster has taught us that we can pull through in the roughest of times.

My friend passed away shortly after Corona Virus infiltrated the U.S and it was a time of great uncertainty where we did not understand how this virus was spread and before we knew the toll it would take. Now I can understand what I felt and the backlash that I received from friends. Not only did I find my dear friend diseased but then when the news broke amongst friends I had to face the questions and the assumptions and the judgment of what had happened to our friend. As a very protective friend I did not disclose certain details mostly out of respect for his immediate family. Unfortunately in this particular situation social media conversion traveled much faster and shit had hit the fan.

It was no longer a conversation of the fact that our friend had passed but how and why. The assumption certain people chose to make was that it was related to Covid-19 when it was not. I did not want to address any details regarding his passing because it was private, but I was forced to shut down these rumors because I felt that I needed to protect my friends privacy and the way he would be remembered. Not only were those assumptions not true but they tarnished my grieving process. I then had friends who believed those false judgments and said to me that since I had found my friend dead that I probably had Covid-19 too. It was almost too much for me to handle.

As I write this personal testimony I find it difficult to look back and relive those moments, but I know that we must face our harsh realities, and as they say, "live to tell the tale." After months of quarantine my friends sister wanted a way to remember her brother and have the opportunity to grieve with loved ones, but because of the pandemic this was almost impossible. It took a first failed attempt because the second wave of Covid had occurred and we had no choice but to postpone the memorial. Finally, when things felt a little safer we chose to go through with this memorial because we could not let our friend, my friends brother not be remembered properly. It was not an easy event to put together, it was one of the most difficult tasks I have ever had to do, but I knew It had to be done.

To say the least life after the 2020 global pandemic will never be the same. Yes restaurants, stores, and all commerce and most businesses that survived are open again, but the people who remain will never be the same. We scraped through and currently carry with us the trauma of the pandemic and now we are expected to go back into society and carry on with our lives. 2020 was a test to how much I could endure as a person and I am happy to say that I am still here, but what we all collectively experienced will never be forgotten. Most importantly all of our loved ones who we lost during the pandemic will never be forgotten.

Today I can remember my friend as he was, alive and vibrant and the best listener. Today I can almost function without panic attacks and I can think of "that day" as the moment when I became a different person but a much stronger one. The pandemic has left us all changed but also resilient and fragile at the same time

and that is fine. I learned so many things about myself, my capacities, my boundaries and also my empathy and love. We are not defined through our failures and flaws but through our character. I dedicate this article to anyone that experienced loss during the pandemic and mostly in memory of my dear friend Michael Johnson.

Monica Valenzuela

April 29th, 2021





[Title]: “I Am More Than My Darkness”

[Author]: Ana Feleuamanu Langi Afu

[Date Received]: April 29, 2021

[Text]:

Hi, my name is Ana Feleuamanu Langi Afu. I am 26 years old and I grew up in Long Beach and it's surrounding areas such as Bellflower; which is where we went to school for the most part. My parents hail from the islands of Tongatapu in the South Pacific Ocean; but according to DNA, I am specifically a mixture of Tongan, Fijian and Samoan. This, completely adds up to cultural history; and my parents familial lineage. I am the daughter of religious-missionary immigrants (my father was a police officer but aspiring preacher [i.e. he is the son of a pastor] and my mother worked for the government tele-company) who migrated here in the 1990s; in pursuit of a better life and American educational opportunities. Unfortunately, things did not end up coming to fruition in the way my parents perceived. Life was much more complicated than their naive selves could have ever imagined.

My mother has been deeply mentally ill since her childhood; and I only just received this information this year. This is gonna be the first excerpt I have ever written a piece with real, raw truth of my life; and not some similar version of my real life happenings but with a fake ending. My family was EXTREMELY dysfunctional. From before I was born, I was dealt hands that would prove me either formidable or weak in the mind, heart, soul and future. I am here and now; and I can finally fully say I MADE IT OUT. I fought my way out blindly and to the best of my ability at the time, but I am HERE and NOW; and I think I have finally begun understanding the meaning and feeling behind true happiness.

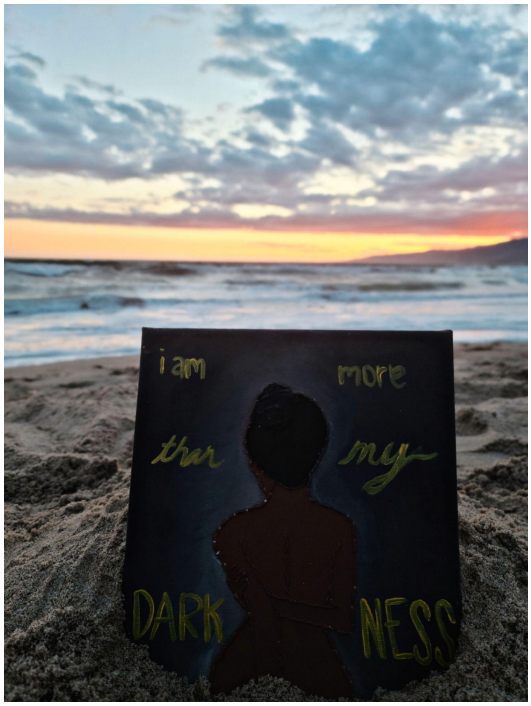
Happiness. A quite common emotion but yet only truly felt rarely. Well, in my case that statement holds true. Quarantine was, and is, a result of one of the most fatal viruses in the world right now. Oddly though, it may just have been the biggest blessing in my 26 years on this planet. I say this with the best intentions and my heart goes out to all those souls who returned to the universe because of covid-19. I believe, as a consensus, we have started to move in a more mental awareness age as a result of "quarantine life". Breaking out the norm of working to survive, I realized my childhood trauma was NOT ONLY caused by my parents own upbringing, island lifestyle and differing cultural views, but as a result of THIS SYSTEM.

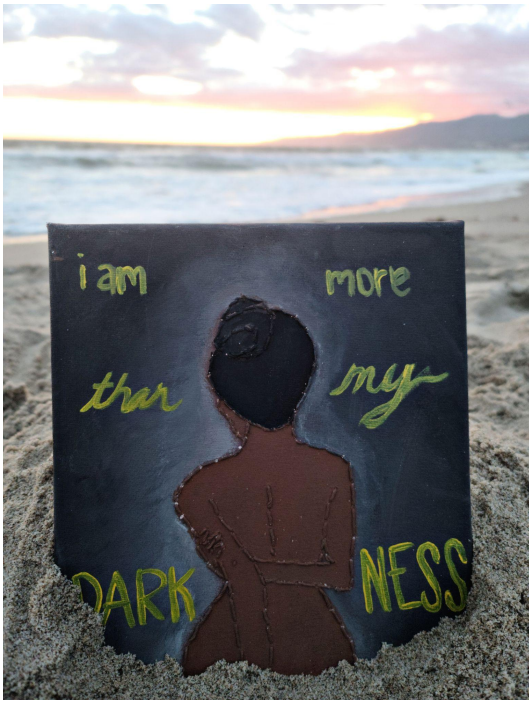
I have come through some very high highs and extremely low low. At the end of it all, I am always drawn back to the same conclusion. I have been judged my whole life based on how I look or looked at a certain time. Whether it was from my own mother berating my brown skin as a young girl and physically abusing me or in elementary school where they ridiculed me for being overgrown, tall and "boyish" or to 23 year old freshly single out of the captivation of my only relationship in life for 7 toxic years; and boyyyyyyy! Are the stories fucking wild. I used to run from my reality.....but these days I stop my old coping mechanisms in their tracks (sometimes lol I'm a work in progress) and try to actively correct my thinking or ground myself. There is no clear path to healing or growing from old wounds, for some wounds may never heal, but may leave a beautiful scar; and we can only control our perspective of situations and create the narrative we are going to choose to live our most true, authentic, and happy life with.

I am not just another hurt brown girl.

I AM MORE.

I AM MY ANCESTORS DREAM.


i am
more
than
my
DARK
NESS

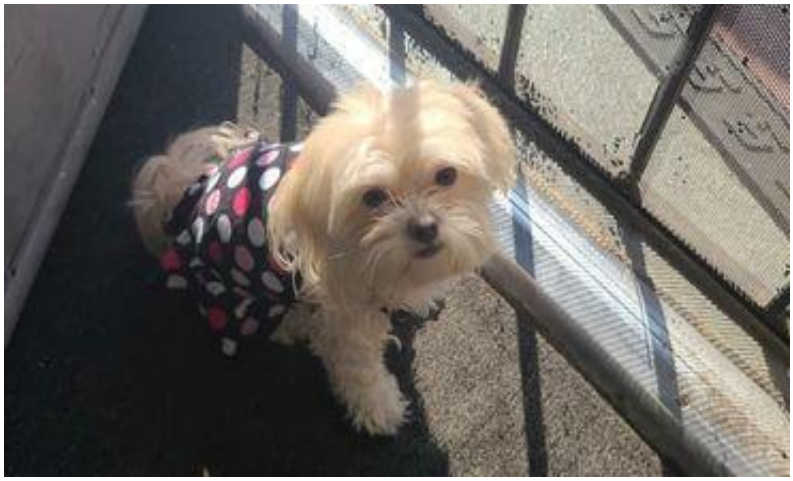

i am
more
than
my
DARK
NESS

[Title]: “[Untitled]”
[Author]: Christina Muñoz
[Date Received]: April 30, 2021
[Text]:
The CoronaVirus pandemic has been really tough as a student for me. While my professors have been understanding and I get to work from home so that has been nice and fortunate for me. It is also the problem, its rough being home all day and not being able to go anywhere. It has been hard to manage school work and find a quiet place at home to focus on school work. I am a student who utilized our library to study and do homework so not having that has been difficult. While it has been tough, to stay positive I finally found time to finally start my board game collecting/playing hobby. I have over 50+ games now, and have really loved how I have been able to bond with my family over them. It has been rough trying to work and do school all from home but I am fortunate that my family has not been extremely affected.

[Title]: “[Untitled]”
[Author]: Vianey Renteria
[Date Received]: April 30, 2021
[Text]:

At the start of the pandemic I enjoyed being home and it was fun because I felt like it was a break from school and work. However as the pandemic progressed it began to get a bit annoying and stressful because there wasn't much to do. I would mostly spend my time playing with my dog. I would take her on walks and I trained her to do new tricks. It was fun because I wouldn't really spend much time with my dog before. As the pandemic continued it was a bit hard to adjust to online classes and it just felt like professors and students were both pretty confused. Now I am back at work and I've adjusted to online school and I still get to spend a lot of time with my dog.





[Title]: "[Untitled]"
[Author]: Andrea Sanchez
[Date Received]: April 30, 2021







[Text]:

I spent last year investing time into Tiger King to distract me from how terrible everything is. I hate online classes, I much rather be on campus. I miss hanging out with friends and doing school work has not been so easy. Netflix has been a huge distraction for me.