

# Living Life Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic



Photographs and Text by Stephanie Bennett 2020

MEMPHIS, TN - Concealed in the house, I find myself reading biblical warnings of the rapture, researching the predictions of Michel de Nostredamus, and any doomsday projection that can I digest. Hungering for a sense of peace, I find myself consistently unsatisfied. There is something about pandemics that can cause one to empty their minds along with supermarket shelves. Only a month ago, I was sitting in Katz's Deli in New York City, eating a pastrami on rye surrounded by at least a hundred strangers. Now the only strangers around me come from the soft glow of a television screen.

Traveling from Framingham State University to my home in Memphis, I packed only necessities: A week's worth of clothes, a toothbrush, and my laptop. Certain that my Spring Break was bound to end, I left my car and many valuable belongings. COVID-19 has changed everything. Today, I am uncertain when, or if I can return to my dorm to retrieve my possessions. The way of life, as I know, has altered indefinitely. Social distancing is now a public service, hand-washing has become a compulsive necessity, and the skepticism accompanied by a cough or a sneeze will forever linger. The only certainty I am guaranteed is the bleak solace of the uncertain.



March 13. Framingham Logan Express Station is vacant as passengers avoid traveling in fear of the novel coronavirus.



My partner Alex remarked, “There was this rude lady that skipped us to get a seat on the bus. We couldn’t help but laugh because once we got on, we realized that more than half of the bus was empty... we were like, ‘what is the point of being so cutthroat in a time like this?’”

March 13. A Framingham Logan Express charter bus is almost empty as it departs to Logan Airport in Boston.



March 13. Terminal B TSA line is unusually quiet for a Friday afternoon, as fear of the coronavirus spreads.

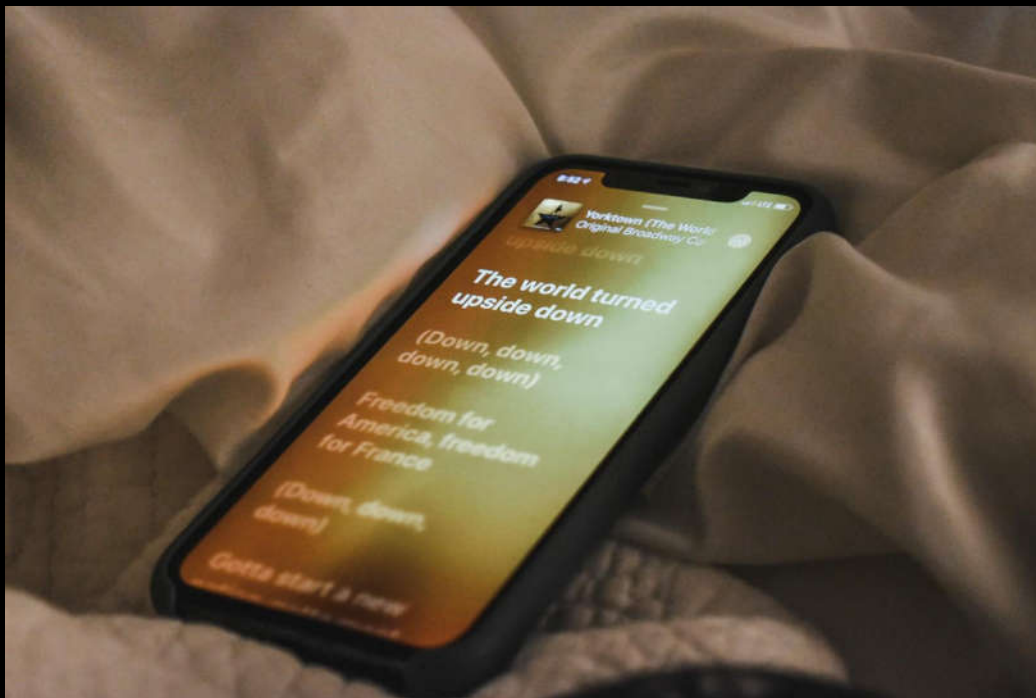
“It was eerie,” Alex said. “Many of the seats on the plane were empty. The flight attendant even gave us free booze as if the world was ending, and it was his last good deed.”



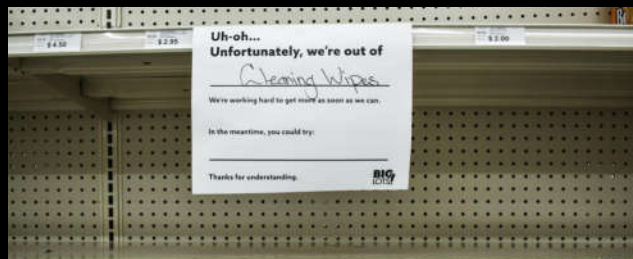
March 13. Unoccupied seats on American Airlines Flight 2129 from Boston to Washington D.C.



March 16. Shoppers search for toilet paper at Target in Memphis, Tennessee. Consumers are hoarding household necessities causing a nationwide shortage in toilet paper.



March 16. Only a few hours after Framingham State University President Javier Cevallos announced that classes will shift entirely to remote methods of instruction, the world certainly felt "upside down" for many students.



March 16. Big Lots and Target take precautions to limit customers to two sanitation products per person.

My Mother said, “Before I shipped them to Texas, I arranged all the items to take a photo to send in our group chat... I wanted to let them know that Mama was takin’ care of her babies despite the distance.”



March 17. After searching multiple stores, my mother, Amy, felt the “luck on the Irish” on St. Patrick’s Day when she found household necessities such as bleach and toilet paper.



March 19. Customers waiting in line to get into Costco Wholesale in Memphis. Costco has implemented a waiting system to prevent overcrowding within stores.



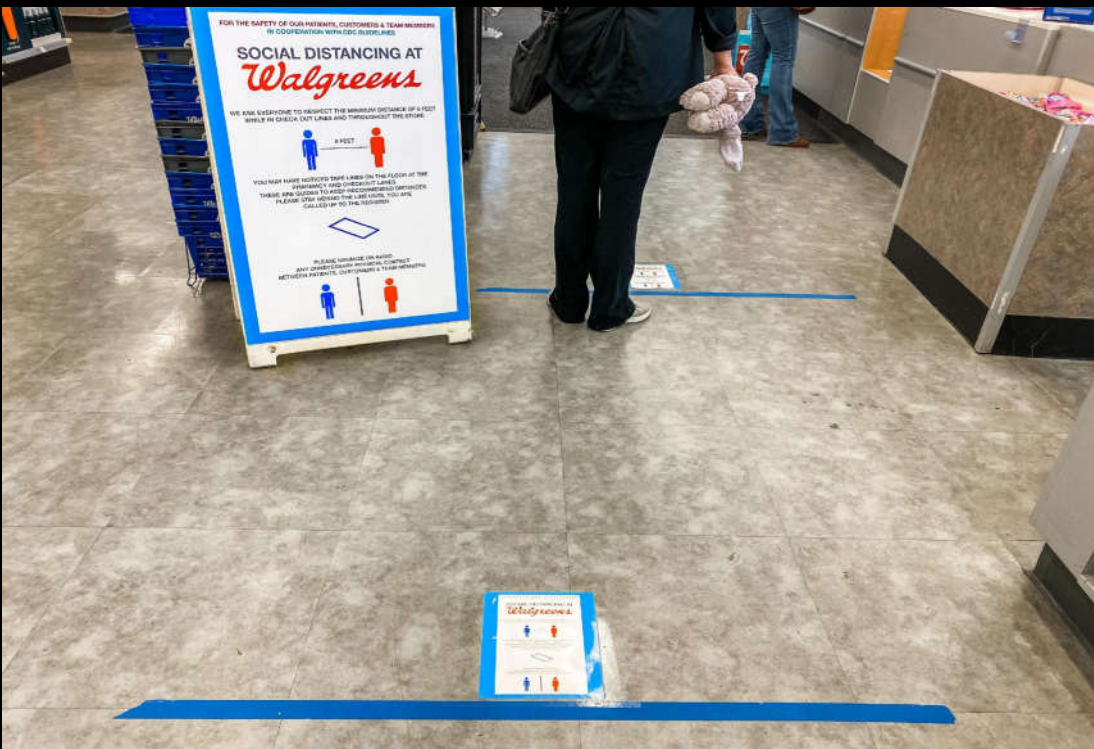
March 20. Sasha longing to go outside, captures the same feelings of millions around the world, as many practice social distancing.



March 26. Baby formula, potatoes, and lunchmeat seem to have disappeared from the shelves at the local Wal-Mart as customers hoard products after Memphis's Safer At Home executive order was issued.



March 26. After Memphis Mayor, Jim Strickland, issued a Safer At Home order just the previous evening, Alex purchased a Nintendo Switch allowing him to travel on a virtual odyssey while adhering to the city's precautionary mandate.



March 28. Painters tape line the floor at the local Walgreens. Exactly six-feet apart, the lines ensure that Memphians are social distancing.



“Although, I am grateful that I’m healthy,” said Alex. “It’s been hard—lots of distractions. I feel like the workload has doubled. My family thinks I’m on vacation. I am confined to a two-bedroom apartment and bunking with my 13-year-old sister.”

March 31. The “new normal” begins to set in for Alex as he attends his online class.





April 9. Homemade mask-making becomes the latest hobby.



April 29. Pictured is Alex holding a tape measure. The CDC recommends that individual's social distance is at least six-feet to prevent the spread of COVID-19.