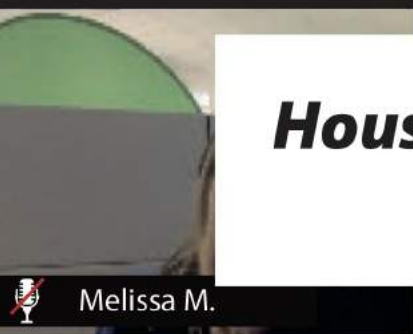


# iWRITER

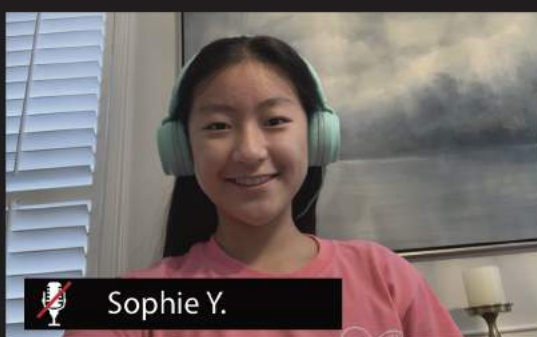
## BY KIDS FOR KIDS MAGAZINE

Issue 01  
May 2020



### ***Houston Voices During the COVID-19 Crisis***

### ***Social Distancing Fun!***



**DOCUMENTING HISTORY THROUGH  
THE EYES OF THIS GENERATION**



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## **Annie Jones** Copy Editor



*I WRITE because it is a way for me to share my thoughts and opinions with others, showing them different perspectives and stories while doing something I enjoy. iWRITE has helped me improve my writing and encouraged me to help others in my community.*

## Designer **Halliday Mafrige**

*I WRITE because I admire the power of words and the change they can make in someone's life. I have written books since I was a little girl and hope to continue writing throughout college and my professional life. I am honored to join the iWRITER as the chief designer.*



# Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

The iWRITE Youth Club is proud to announce the first edition of the iWRITER Magazine! It's been an amazing journey for all of us; the idea was introduced to the club at our general meeting in February, and we began the brainstorming process in mid-March right at the onset of COVID19. Each of the columnists went through several revisions of their writing, and all can attest that the process of publishing our first magazine has been an experience of equal parts excitement and growth. It's also been a great way to release our creative spirits while being cooped up at home. Speaking of creativity, Einstein once said "Creativity is contagious. Pass it on."

During the time of the coronavirus, the Youth Club wants to spread the joy of the creative arts. This edition of the iWRITER offers a kid's take on the history-making pandemic that we are facing now, the novel coronavirus or COVID-19. But not all parts of this magazine are stoic facts; enthralling short stories, beautifully written poems, and even touching personal reflections are within the turn of a page.

But before you turn the page (and I know you will!), I'd like for you, dear reader, to reflect on the situation our world is in now; not just the obvious cons, but some of the pros as well. I recently received a chart via text from one of my friends. It shows COVID-19 in three non-medical stages.

First, the Fear Zone, examples of which are hoarding, spreading negative feelings, and irrational anger. Second, the Learning Zone, wherein you recognize that we're all trying to do our best and identify your emotions. In this zone, you stop compulsively consuming what hurts you; anything from food to news. Third, the final stage: the Growth Zone. You thank and appreciate others, stay happy and spread hope, and try to adapt to the new changes. You show heightened empathy and think of how you can help others. Which one of these stages are you in? Do think about this as you read further.

This may be the crazy, cloistered voice in my head speaking, but I've had a lot of time to reflect in the past month.

My biggest takeaway from the novel coronavirus is that times of crisis, like this, bring unity. We may be physically distanced, but the human race is socially united. We are united in the cause against the coronavirus.

Photo by Tom McCallum



The other day, I went shopping with my mom to stock up on supplies. While checking out, we talked with the cashier about how busy the store was. Suddenly, another customer dropped off bags full of groceries for the pleasantly surprised cashier. The cashier then explained to us that she had made a passing comment to that customer about her long hours and lack of time to buy essentials. By the time the store closed and she could shop for groceries, all the shelves were empty. So the customer asked her what items she needed and, without her knowledge, bought them to surprise her.

This and such kind gestures are what keep humanity going through all trials and tribulations. As a species, we're engineered to support each other; empathy is what differentiates us from wild animals. On the news, the stories of helpful souls are in a number greater than coronavirus press conferences. And I feel this virus came to earth with the mission to wake humanity up from its robotic existence. If we unite, we can surely triumph over this virus. With that said, or rather, written, we come to the end of my note. Happy reading and I hope you enjoy this edition of the iWRITER Magazine. If you want to contribute to this magazine or join the Youth Club, visit <https://iwriteyouthclub.com/join-us/>

Sincerely,

*Eshaan Mani*

Chief Editor



# Catch Up with the Youth Club

by Alex Zhang, Sofia Bajwa, and Katie Giveon, Columnists

## Sofia Reflects on Her 'Bee Inspired' Project

Sixty-eight percent of America's fourth-graders read at a below proficient level, and 82% of those children are from low-income families. Two years ago, I stumbled upon this startling statistic. I knew I wanted to help change it.

Fueled by my own passion for reading and writing, I wanted every child to share the same amazing experiences that I have had with books and stories. So, I decided to spearhead "Bee Inspired" (a play on words with the Scroggins Elementary School's bee mascot). The goal of this project was to transform an underutilized space in their library into a creative area for the students to read, write, and collaborate. With the help of iWRITE Youth Club members, we created a creative corner for the students: complete with garden-inspired murals, bean bag chairs, a green grass rug to read on, newly organized shelving to house donated books, and the students' own artwork on the walls to serve as inspiration. It was a place for the students to develop a love of reading and writing—a place for them to "bee inspired!" I felt like I had witnessed a real HGTV transformation moment!

When we finished, we organized a grand opening event for over 100 students to showcase the new space. I beamed with pride as students rushed into the new space and filled it with excited giggles and chattering.

Two years later, I am still surprised that changing such a small space could have such a large impact on my community and myself. We had done so much more than makeover a room; we were cultivating possibilities for budding artists, authors, and storytellers to "bee inspired!"

## Alex Reflects on the Publishing Process of 'Spark'

If I had to sum up the experience of publishing a book, it would be "tiring." Far be it from me to complain about the work involved, though; the only thing I really did during the whole process was write the book (which plays a significantly less important role than I was led to believe). After publishing *Spark*, my first novel, it's clear to me that behind every great author stands a legion of incredible people. Even though I still have yet to become a great author, I couldn't have made it through the publishing journey without the support of the people around me. I have no doubt in my mind that I would've given up long before my dreams came to fruition if not for my amazing parents, teachers, friends, and iWRITE YOUTH CLUB MEMBERS! (haha, I'm serious though) In the end, I was just one piece of a much larger puzzle, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

I think the real moment where I realized that I was actually writing a book was when it was sitting in front of me on the dining table. The culmination of my endless battle against writer's block had been given form, for the first time. I was

so happy I felt like I was floating. I'm not an emotional person, so I reacted to it in the same way I'd react to a bowl of warm oatmeal, but rest assured that my heart almost burst with pride. The true publishing journey was only just beginning, though. The fact that I had to sell my book had somehow slipped my mind, even as I read up about the costs that I was accumulating. Let me tell you- marketing a book is much harder than writing it. Admittedly, I am a huge introvert, but I found talking to people far more taxing than being hunched in front of a computer screen for hours on end. It was fun, though! I met a lot of new people, reconnected with some old ones, and generally had a good time. For any aspiring authors who may be reading this, make sure that you have a good synopsis of your book after you're done. If I had a dollar for every time I said my book was about "this kid named Jack who goes on adventures and stuff," I would be a rich man indeed.

I meet a lot of people who say that they want to write a book, but that it's too tiring. I get it- the prospect of writing an entire novel is incredibly intimidating to face down when you're at the beginning. Experience helps, here. *Spark* wasn't actually the first novel that I'd written- that particular honor goes to *Attack of the Evil Snowmen*, the contents of which will never see the light of day. If you're afraid of writing, I'd encourage you to start small. Explore different ways to write until you find something you like. I'm not exaggerating when I say that writing is one of the most rewarding experiences of my entire life, and I hope that this article inspires others to undertake the same journey that I did.

## Katie Reflects on Her 'Lights Out Lit' Project

According to a study in 2019, only 20% of children hear bedtime stories. Being read to helps improve children's language skills, encourages imagination and creativity, teaches empathy, grows vocabulary, and gives opportunities for conversation. I wanted to give more children the opportunity to be read to, so I created Lights Out Lit, an online video library. We record iWRITE Youth Club members reading children's stories, scan the books, and edit the videos so that viewers can see both the pages and the faces of the people reading. They can read along while being read to. Being a part of the iWRITE Youth Club has provided me this opportunity spread my love of reading and writing with others. I feel strongly about the power of words and their ability to transform, inspire, and make a difference. Lights Out Lit is meant to empower children and give them a voice, and it was made possible through iWRITE.

## Katie Giveon Columnist

*I WRITE because I believe that words can transform lives, share ideas, and let people know that they're not alone. I love that iWRITE gives kids a voice and encourages them to express themselves.*



# A Personal Approach: Positivity

by Kate-Yeonjae Jeong, Co-Chief Editor

With the start of the decade, tremendous, prominent changes have been brought upon us. The COVID-19 struck beginning December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and was spread to the rest of the world, and a global pandemic ensued.

Panic and crisis are everywhere, and public facilities have been shut down. The stock market has crashed, and many companies face bankruptcy. Streets are empty and stores are vacant. Not to mention, of course, the lives at risk and already taken.

However, with these shutdowns, more time is brought. As we all social distance to flatten the curve so we can save lives, it is found that we have extra time in comparison to our regular hectic lives. Many of us have checklists to complete, and goals we would like to meet. The time that rests on our hands, it seems, can provide opportunities for us to get things done and be productive. With the personal times set out, what could you do? I personally find that now is a good period to take a moment and self-reflect. Additionally, we all could give our loved ones a call to check up on them, whereas other moments, with busy schedules, we could not as much. These times provide a chance where you can discover yourself and more about others. For those in search of a meaningful pastime, I urge you to pick up a book, pen, or even learn a new hobby. Instead of eating time, we can savor it to the fullest extent of its taste.

The epidemic has also brought a time people are taking health and safety more seriously. The 20-second wash-your-hands rule seems to be taking a stride, and with more sanitization and awareness of taking care of our bodies, this seems to be an informational time for many people.

Additionally, with the absence of humans, the planet is slowly healing. Without bustling tourists and people, the environment is now much cleaner. For one, China saw its first blue sky after its factories shut down. That, in turn, cleared the dust pollution China's air inflicted upon neighboring countries, such as South Korea and

Japan. New York saw positive change as well, with its pollution "decreasing as much as 50 percent," according to BBC News. Venice saw clearer water in its usual tourist-crowded canals, as the gondolas no longer stirred up the mud from the bottom.

Hardships definitely bring a challenge during this time, but I believe that together, we can make the best of the situation. While we stay safe and take into consideration of others' health, staying positive may be a good method to keep your mind clear.



**Photo by Kate-Yeonjae Jeong**

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**Kate Jeong** Co-Chief Editor

*I WRITE because I have a passion for being able to share my reflections and thoughts with others. I write so I can share the spark that writing's joys give with many other interested students.*

# Houston Voices During a Crisis

## People from Different Walks of Life Speak Out

By Eshaan Mani, Chief Editor and Sanjna Pandit, Columnist

The novel coronavirus has hit almost all corners of the world with its pathogenic terror. People from all walks of life have been affected by this disease, the origins of which are disputed.

For us, as middle school students, it's been a whirlwind experience, with pros and cons. Online school, for one, has been a unique experience. Our only non-familial interactions are with teachers and classmates boxed in our screens, as if we're living in a science fiction movie. It's not as fun as seeing them in person, but we do find that we're more productive and have more time for introspection.

The iWRITER took a peek into the lives of several Houstonians to grasp the profound, undeniable impact that COVID-19 has had on our world. To start with, we've interviewed a frontline medical worker and hero during this pandemic, Dr. Pandit, who shares her voice and perspectives on the new 'abnormal'.

**Dr. Lavannya Pandit, M.D.**  
**Pulmonologist and Frontline Worker**  
*Interviewed by Sanjna Pandit*

Dr. Pandit has been a physician for at least two decades, providing her a lot of experience and knowledge in her medical field. She is an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Pulmonary, Critical Care, and a full-time doctor at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.

To put it into simpler terms, she watches over the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) patients and conducts laboratory experiments, as well. Regardless of all these titles and a very demanding schedule, she stays true to who she is inside. I often ask her how she manages all of it. After all, human lives are in her hands. She assures me that the thing she loves best besides her own family is serving others. Taking care of her patients and making a special bond with them is what she feels she was born to do and will do no matter what the circumstances. Pious and devoted, she looks to the Lord for guidance and wisdom as she tackles this novel coronavirus.

Life has changed dramatically for front line doctors and their families ever since COVID-19 became widespread. The biggest impact for us is that everything has slowed down. There's no more rushing to get to school or a

baseball game on time. However, Dr. Pandit and her team have done anything but slowed down. "We've been preparing for the last month, and it has become increasingly busier with more meetings and a lot more thoughts and new skill sets and challenges to adapt to."

The patients that Dr. Pandit sees are rather complicated, and she explains why. "We are taking care of people who are most affected by COVID-19 and who end up being hospitalized with a specific entity called severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). They require mechanical ventilation, which is a machine to help them breathe because COVID-19 affects the lower respiratory tract."

On a regular day of work, as an attending in the teaching hospital, Dr. Pandit works with residents, but given the consequences of contracting COVID-19, they've been sent home. "I find that I'm having to not only figure out how to care for my patients and support their families but also support my large team and be a leader in roles I hadn't expected to play before." Like most other parents working on the front lines, Dr. Pandit worries about her own family taking this all in. She is among the few who cannot be home every day to support her kids like other parents can for theirs.

However, as the weeks have progressed, she learned that her kids have settled into a routine despite the evolving uncertainty. "I've really enjoyed watching my kids as siblings get closer since they're home together." Even though she misses the pre-coronavirus days, she's proud that her kids have become more "resilient and creative." She's also very grateful for the support system in her spouse, children, parents, and the neighborhood and Houston community.

Before the week of April 20-27, Dr. Pandit will work 12-hour shifts and have direct contact with infected patients. She will not be able to have physical contact with her family during an already long and difficult week, so she is savoring their hugs while she can. She has also exercised more often. "I find that regular physical exercise helps clear my mind and allows me to deal with uncertainty in a far more effective way." In order to take care of the patient, she must take care of herself first. Thank you so much for your service, Dr. Pandit! You are not just my amazing mother but my amazing role model.



## Reya Pal

### Senior at Elkins High School

*Interviewed by Eshaan Mani*

Reya worked doubly hard for the first half of her senior year to get to enjoy the more relaxed second semester. Inspired by her mom, Reya's project since the fall of 2019 has been to design her unique prom dress. In December, she painstakingly chose a beautiful \$60 teal dress off of Amazon and bought some gold embroidered lace on Etsy.

After picking out her favorite designs, she worked for three months, all the way till early March. "All of us [ students] expected a big shutdown as soon as the virus hit. But we thought we'd be back to school before prom." Reya kept designing, using the extra time to perfect the fine details. When news of school cancellations and postponed proms came, Reya felt deflated.

"I'm disappointed...we work hard for three and a half years for the last half of our senior year. That's the semester when we get to have fun, work is light, and we can hang out with friends to seal high school memories." But Pal's project was not all for nothing; she and her friends got creative and planned a FaceTime prom to celebrate and compensate for the lost occasion. And she went to a field of bluebonnets with her family to take some pictures, too.

Though she couldn't have the conventional prom experience,

Reya learned how to better plan ahead, the definition of perseverance and patience, and to appreciate every opportunity she gets. It's a tough time for high school seniors, who were born into a grieving post-9/11 world and are graduating when the world is combatting a pandemic like none before. But seniors like Reya are an example of true resilience: they turned disappointment into a rewarding, positive experience.

## Melissa Williams-Murphy

### Nonprofit CEO and Founder

*Interviewed by Eshaan Mani*

Mrs. Melissa Williams-Murphy, the founder and CEO of iWRITE, explained that for nonprofits like hers, this is an excellent time for "getting creative and advancing in ways that will make the organization stronger." Besides launching the magazine that you are currently reading and the organization's first daily writing/illustration prompt newsletter, iWRITE hosted its first weekly television program on My20 (KTXH) during the pandemic.

Mrs. Murphy has also had the opportunity to spend family time with her husband Matt and son Jackson. Both she and her husband are working from home without childcare, which is "a major adjustment."

Mrs. Melissa says that it's a great time to learn new skills or do things you may have been putting off for a while. She's been learning

more tricks with technology, like creating a home video-recording studio, complete with a green screen.

She misses the worry-free attitude of pre-coronavirus life. Wellness overall, including finances, health, and the long-term future, have never been so emphasized. If there's one thing that humanity should take away after this pandemic, according to Mrs. Murphy, it is to evaluate "what matters most and what's worth fighting for. It shows us that at the end of the day, we are not in control - never take that for granted. Cherish every moment."

## Conclusion

The passionate and honest words spoken by Mrs. Murphy, Ms. Pal, and Dr. Pandit greatly moved us. They are only some of the countless hardworking and dependable people like them out there who are helping our society in many ways such as making masks, delivering food, and cleaning their homes to free it from germs. Hope is a very important thing to hold on to, especially now. We hope that the coronavirus ends soon. We hope the suffering lives will be healed. Nevertheless, we are all in this together. Whenever you feel down and unsure about what tomorrow may bring, take a deep breath and think of all the wonderful things that remain in your life despite these unprecedented times. Thank you so much for taking the time to read this article, and we hope you enjoyed it!

## Sanjna Pandit Columnist

*I WRITE because writing cultivates my ability to be eloquent and express my feelings and ideas in my special way. I learn more and more about myself with every new thought that I put on paper. Whether writing an extensive article or fiction poetry, my mind forces me to enter a whole new realm of imagination and discoveries that I never knew I could reach.*

## Eshaan Mani Chief Editor

*I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel. It is that exhilarating experience, and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.*





# IWRITE PUBLISHING CONTEST

**SUBMISSION  
DEADLINE  
MAY 31, 2020**



**UPDATE:** We know that COVID-19 is on everyone's mind, including our youth, which is why we have decided to expand our contest theme to include stories, poems, and artwork that will reflect this historical moment. We are extending the theme to include submissions that have a creative perspective on what we are all experiencing around the world.

**SHORT STORIES  
BY KIDS FOR KIDS**

## WANT TO BE A PUBLISHED AUTHOR?

Go above and beyond!  
Submit your **short story**,  
**poem** or **artwork** for a  
chance to be professionally  
published in the 11th volume  
of our anthology.



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**IWRITE**  
WE HELP KIDS WRITE THEIR SUCCESS STORY!

**This year's contest theme is Outer Space.** Your submission can be anything associated with the expanse that exists beyond the Earth and between celestial bodies (Moon, Sun, planets, etc.).

**Submissions accepted** now through May 31, 2020.

**Students in 3rd through 12th grades** are eligible to enter. We're accepting short stories, poetry and cover art.

**Win a spot** in our next anthology! All winning students will have his/her biography and headshot in the book.

**Get invited** to our annual luncheon & book signing celebration. Winners will receive a complimentary ticket and two guest tickets to our biggest event of the year courtesy of iWRITE.

**Show off your talents.** Share your published work and accomplishments potential colleges/jobs. Make your resume and/or college application stand out with this award.

**For full details and questions** go to [www.iwrite.org/i-write-contest](http://www.iwrite.org/i-write-contest) or email [contest@iwrite.org](mailto:contest@iwrite.org)



# The Worldwide iWRITE Luncheon

by Mariah Adeeko, Columnist

The day that I volunteered for iWRITE's ten year luncheon, I felt like an official member of the organization. I had been (and currently still am) part of the iWRITE Youth Club, but there was something about seeing how many talented authors and accomplished people my age all around the world surrounded me. Let me start from the beginning.

I found out about iWRITE through my mom around two summers ago, and I got more involved with the organization to the point where I was brave enough to join the youth club. The club let me network with creative artists like GONZO247, get my work published in their anthologies, and set me up for other great opportunities.

One meeting, we were discussing the youth club's roles for the upcoming ten year anniversary; the event was globally themed as publishing submissions come in all across the world in the iWRITE publishing content. Consequently, I was able to help different guests from around the world with an interactive pin-map activity.

It was a fantastic experience, and also really humorous to see people debate with their colleagues as to where to place their pin(s). The event was an incredibly smooth experience. Everything from the

catering to the venue was very fitting for my taste (which is quite good). Looks are important, but the iWRITE team focused on uplifting kids and literacy in an honorable reception. The luncheon made young published authors, myself included, feel like royalty with the mature way the iWRITE team handled how a genre like fiction written by someone under eighteen is just as ingenious as an author of a YA book.

And if giving a proper networking system to children who are serious about writing is the entire goal of iWRITE, it didn't surprise me that their luncheon succeeded in summarizing exactly that. I just have so much more respect for iWRITE after the luncheon due to all the new ways I saw iWRITE staff try to include more kids in a writing journey they usually wouldn't get in their regular schooling.

In conclusion, I hope I get to volunteer at the next iWRITE Luncheon, and hopefully the twenty year celebration one as well. I believe that the biggest success of the luncheon was how the theme was truly for everyone and connected how literature attached everyone in the venue together. When I was going through the run throughs and prep, I was just thinking of the luncheon as another event; however, I now think of the luncheon almost as iWRITE's gateway for student-led success.



**Mariah Adeeko** Columnist

*I WRITE because I love the organization's message and want to use my talents to promote it and its message.*

# A Place for Poetry!

## Isolation

By Sophie Yu

Isolation stings with loneliness  
And time seems to pass like molasses  
As if I'm trapped in an hourglass

I watch the whole world  
Slowly fade into silence  
And a stillness has settled

I watch the cars on the street disappear  
And I am brought to a new dimension  
Of tranquility, of a cloud  
that has fogged my memory of home  
I am brought to  
Isolation.



## Sophie Yu

*I WRITE because I can create a connection through my words and inspire others to continue or start writing. Writing is an amazing way to express my feelings too!*

## Austin Lopez

*I WRITE because I have words to say and a passion to say them with. I love the old Star Wars, Percy Jackson, and AJR, and I'm a firm believer that everything isn't always as it seems.*



## The Tide

By Austin Lopez

The tide comes in and it's hardly a sin  
It sweeps over all, its wave so tall  
But it's soon gone for a new dawn  
Its effect left behind to remind  
But don't weep, the fruits we reap  
Will make up for it and never flit  
We have endured worse, it's no curse  
The tide comes in and it will command  
A presence once more and bellow its mighty roar  
So, don't fear, history will only leer  
Watch the tide lo and behold and know  
The tide will leave, and we will still reprieve



# Radiance Through Ice and Tomball

By Mariah Adeeko

1. radiance: is defined like barbeque stains and pit stops at hruska's; we picked up our sister at the psychology department and made our way past tomball. i've never been there, but here's a drive in theatre with dim lit neon and pink faces that fall into wrinkles too soon.

2. listening to songs on the radio that people born in 1964 listen to, i pass tomball and wonder why it never snows in houston. it's so hot in houston. nothing could possibly survive there.

3. r is for red skies from agricultural means,  
a is for "advertisements sold here",  
d is for damsels in distress that listen to television and children that want to go to school,  
i is for isolation,  
n is for nebulas that paint the showboat drive in,  
and t is for the tanks (gas) that help you skip to H-E-B

4. there's a sweet lady at wendy's, who probably owes money to her dentist, who hands you dejected fries soaked in lobster colored runaway. her teeth must be stained green from crunching on ice, she turned her mouth down when the TV came on and her coworkers noticed some change falling out of her pocket.

a. your mom, and our dad, getting lunch meat between bread at the subway nearby

b. your sister is in line with you. we picked her up because of all the panic.

5. all this time has got me thinking; what kind of movies to people born in the 70s watch;

i think vegetables don't make me cry anymore, and my parents are happy about that. i see

a blushing lady in my neighborhood i've never seen before bend down and pick up radishes.

radishes...disgusting.

## Mother Nature

By Prisha Shivani

It spread swiftly across seven oceans  
Originating in nature  
Some may think this is a reaction or a response  
Causing us to slow down, react and reflect.

As we comprehend the dilemma,  
We must unite, as one whole  
To find an answer to this key

In our isolation  
We are distant but stand united  
For actions are stronger than words  
We must make amends to end to this crises

We made this choice together  
For we choose to live in Solitude  
To overcome our distress  
We must unite, as one whole

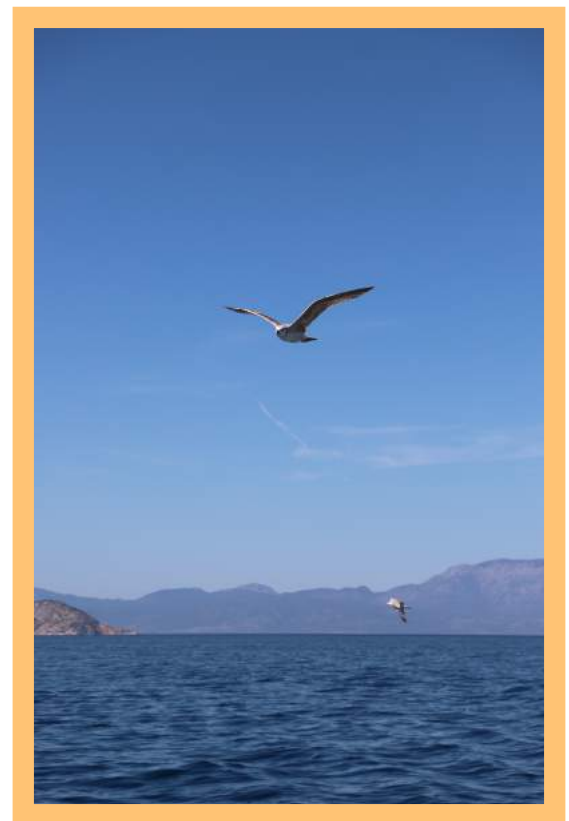


Photo by Eshaan Mani



**Prisha Shivani** Columnist

*I WRITE because it is a creative way of expressing your thoughts and ideas through words. iWRITE has given me the opportunity to write and publish, sharing my pieces with many people.*

# The Second Wave *A Short Story*

by Alex Zhang, Columnist

Johnny scratched his head as he poked around at the dirt with a large shovel. The moon loomed above him in the sky, a thin silver sliver in a sea of stars. He was muttering to himself as he worked, a sizeable pile of dirt building up behind him as he dug.

Johnny, like many others, had lost his wife in the first wave of disease. He'd been on a business trip abroad when it had struck, and the subsequent quarantine had forced him to hole up in a grimy motel for several weeks. He called her every day, of course. He'd heard her coughing, but she told him not to worry about it.

As the days dragged on, she'd begun to answer less frequently. Conversations grew few and far between, and the mysterious cough she'd developed worsened in intensity. She'd been to the doctors, been on the pills, and nothing was helping at all.

One day, she stopped answering the phone entirely.

Johnny had watched her coffin sink into the earth. The years that followed were a struggle, to say the least. Despite what everyone told him, the yearning never got easier; he just got better at hiding it.

He knew that she was dead. He'd seen the corpse. So why-

"Johnny, dinner's almost ready! Where are you, you rascal?"

Johnny paused, his shovel caked with earth. He wiped the sweat from his brow and continued to work.

Why was this happening?

The news had swept across the nation. Those that had died from the disease were miraculously found whole once more, back and better than ever. Families were reunited, couples brought back together, awkward conversations

started with those who'd remarried. Everybody just seemed to accept that people were rising from the dead. But not Johnny. He had to know why.

Because the thing currently calling him from the kitchen certainly wasn't his wife.

Johnny hadn't noticed at first. It had started small, as most things did: a misplaced birthmark here, a splash of previously undiscovered freckles there. Then he'd looked deeper. He noticed when leafing through his old photos that his wife's eyes had never been green at all. A strange sense of dread had settled over him as he continued finding discrepancy after discrepancy in what was purported to be the woman he'd married. Why was she so...energetic? She was far more lively after she'd died than she'd ever been in life. Was it just his imagination, or had her teeth gotten sharper? And what was that odd buzzing sound he kept hearing whenever he was around her?

"Johnny? C'mon, don't leave me hanging!"

"I'm coming, honey," Johnny called, letting out a small sigh of relief as his shovel hit the lid of the coffin. He hurriedly cleared the last of the soil away before wrenching the casket open, bracing himself for a peek at what was truly happening.

There was nothing in the coffin. It was indeed as though Johnny's wife had simply clawed her way out of six feet of solid earth to rejoin him in the land of the living. Slightly disappointed, Johnny replaced the coffin lid and climbed back out of the pit, futilely attempting to brush the dirt off of his clothes.

Johnny ate in glum silence as what claimed to be his wife cheerfully talked about her day, a huge smile plastered upon her face. She kept looking at Johnny, though. He could feel her gaze tracing over his dirt-splattered overalls, his unkempt hair, his tired eyes.

"Is something wrong, Johnny?" she reached over



"Is something wrong, Johnny?" she reached over the table to him, clasping his hand in her own as her brows furrowed with concern. Her skin was soft and warm and somehow utterly repulsive. "You've taken your medicine, right?"

"Of course I've taken it," Johnny quickly said, his eyes skittering away from her.

His wife laughed. It sounded wonderful. "You were always so terrible at lying, Johnny. To yourself and to me." She pulled out an orange bottle of pills, its contents rattling as she slid it across the table to him. "Doctor's orders. I still am a doctor, even if I stopped for a while."

"I... I don't want them," Johnny brusquely said, pushing the pills back. His hands had begun to tremble slightly. "They give me headaches."

"We both know why you don't want them, Johnny," his wife said, her hands clasped in front of her. "It's part of the reason why you've stopped looking me in the eyes when you talk to me. Why are you so afraid that I'll disappear?"

Johnny felt warm tears in the corners of his eyes. "I can't lose you again, Alice. Even if you're something living in my head, I want you to stay a little longer. Please don't go. Please."

Alice sighed and rose from her seat. She walked over to Johnny's seat and held him close. "I'm not going anywhere. You couldn't get rid of me if you wanted to."

Johnny felt like his heart was about to burst. His chest tightened as his vision blurred with moisture. "Please don't go," he whispered again, his face buried in her dress.

"Hush now. You're staining my clothes," Alice said, a smile on her face.



*Photo by Kate-Yeonjae Jeong*



## **Alex Zhang** Columnist

*I WRITE because it's a way to bring my wildest dreams to life and share them with others. I really love iWRITE because of the family that I've found within the organization.*

# Social Distancing Fun

by Sofia Bajwa, Columnist

You have probably spent countless days in social distancing, getting to know the walls of your room (you're now kind of over the honeydew color that you chose eight years ago), stories about your parent's childhood that you definitely could have done without (I mean, I don't know about you, but I really could have passed on seeing old photos of my dad with a mullet), and the layout of your pantry (especially where the chocolate chip cookies are hidden on the bottom shelf by the shoe rack) really well.

Congratulations! Although it's hard to find a prolonged interest inside the confines of your home, especially when it seems as if there's no definitive end, no specific day to countdown to or cross out on your calendar, there's something new for you to do or try everyday!

Even if you've already scoured the internet, watched every Youtube video on "Things to do in self-isolation," and read old magazines, I guarantee you there's some super fun and creative ideas on this list! Why wait to try the things you've always wanted to do, new hobbies you couldn't find time for, or languages you've always wished to learn? There's no time like the present.

1

## Spring Cleaning

With spring in full bloom now, what better time to deep clean your room, closet, kitchen, etc? Use the Marie Kondo method, of course, and take everything out of the room and ask yourself if each object sparks joy or has a purpose. If the answer is yes, bring the item back into the room. If the answer is no, it's time to let it go. You'll be surprised by how much you can declutter your surroundings. Take items to a donation center when you're done!

2

## Build a Fort

Grab any blankets, pillows, chairs, and even Christmas lights and create a magical and super comfortable fort!

3

## Make a Movie Projector

Do you have more space in your room now after that deep cleaning? Need something to do in your fort? Try making a home movie projector out of a shoebox and a magnifying glass. Follow simple instructions online or on Youtube, and with a few materials and twenty minutes, you have a DIY projector in no time!

4

## Rock Art

Going for walks right now and getting some fresh air is recommended! But why let the fun stop outside? Next time you're on a walk, maybe pick up a rock or two. Be sure to clean the rock off when you bring it inside. You can paint it and use it as a paperweight! Want a different craft idea? Simply take some wire and wrap it around the rock, and create a small loop at the top, and you have an easy photo holder! (There are great tutorials for this online).

5

## Scrapbook

Go through old photo albums, print off some new photos, and break out your scissors, glue, and tape. Looking back on old photos and reminiscing will definitely make you feel all warm and fuzzy, and maybe you'll even have a gift or two to give someone special when you can see them again!

6

## Cook or Bake

You simply can't run out of recipes to try. Who knows? Maybe you'll even find your next favorite meal!



## 7 Journal

You're definitely going to want to look back on what you were doing during this time! Write down your daily activities. Journals are also a good way to write down your emotions and get your feelings out to process some hard feelings.

## 8

## Get in Touch

Facetime, Zoom, Skype, and Google Hangouts are all free and user-friendly platforms that allow multiple people to see each other at once. Maybe try calling someone you haven't seen in a while.

## Read a Good Book

This is an especially great way to do something fun and relaxing while taking some time away from your screen. With many students transitioning to distance learning, it can be hard on your eyes to spend so much time with blue light. Take a break from electronics, and give your eyes a rest by reading a good book!

## 9

## 10

## Write a Movie

Take whatever phone or camera you have and film something fun! You can write a script and have your family act it out, or you can film a tutorial or music video! Get creative!

## 11

## Redecorate Your Room

Need some feng shui? Try rearranging furniture in your room, changing the layout of the space, or adding some new decorations or artwork to your room to give it a little sprucing up!

## 12

## Family Game Night

Clue? Monopoly? Battleship? Cards? Sorry? Life? Take your pick!

## 13

## Car Wash

Have fun and get some hard work done at the same time! You can have fun getting wet and messy while scrubbing your car. You can even fill up some water balloons and have fun getting in a water fight with your family!

## 14

## Celebrate!

Who says Halloween can't be in April? Why can't you decorate for Christmas in May?

## 15

## Make a "Social Distancing List"

Make your own personal "bucket list" of all of the things you want to get done while social distancing! Can you think of 50 things? 100? Share your list with others and see who can complete the list!



## Sofia Bajwa Columnist

*I WRITE because I love to use writing as a medium to express myself. I love how writing allows everyone to connect with each other and understand each other and the human experience and condition through the language of writing.*



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