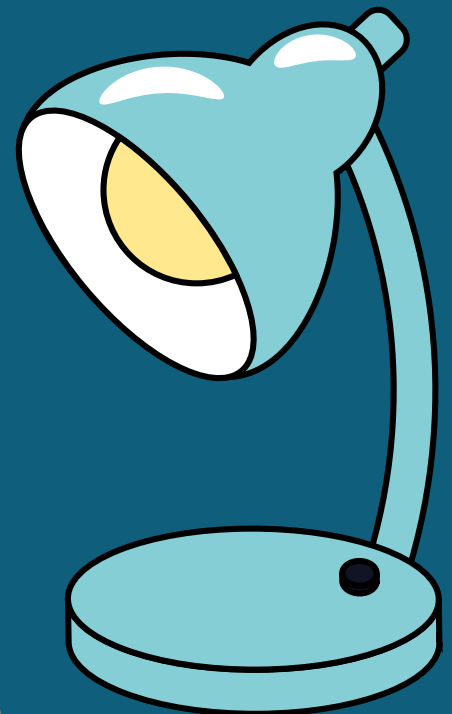


YOUTH BLOGS



23 JUNE. 2020



#PYLBLOGS #CLAPFORTHENHS #STAYHOME
#STAYSAFE #WASHYOURHANDS

It was a lovely, warm March day when we got the news. Year 11s and year 13s everywhere shed streams of tears, rejoiced and took to the internet to share their shock. All A-level and GCSE exams had been cancelled permanently for this year. Sure, we had speculated this and some of us had secretly fantasized hearing those golden words, but getting the news was still surreal.

Within the next couple of days our schools would be shut indefinitely and we'd be spending most of our waking hours confined at home. The next few days at school were confusing to say the least. In some lessons we were still doing work (sadly), I even had an exam which I had been counting on being cancelled; whereas in others we spent trying to fit in our last goodbye, sharing a few good moments and reminiscing with fellow classmates as we had no clue when we would next see each other.

The first few weeks of quarantine were like sweet, sweet bliss.

Waking up when we wanted, sleeping when we wanted and pretty much completing Netflix, YouTube and the internet. I know I'm not alone when I say that I was completely shattered after months of waking up at 6 AM, spending 6 hours at school then coming straight home, to revise and prepare for the 26 exams which would determine where I would be studying next year, and therefore my future, I think a rest was well deserved for everyone. After speaking to friends I knew I wasn't the only one, dinner became the new breakfast for many young people as we caught up on lost sleep by any means necessary.

Once the novelty had worn off it then dawned on us. No prom, No leavers assembly, No hoodie and shirt signing, no 11 week long summer, no NCS, no hanging out with friends, no results day as we knew it. All the rite of passage activities to end 5 long gruelling years of hard work, dedication and sacrifice; we'd never get to experience and on top of that our final grades weren't really our final grades. On average the few months before GCSE's a student goes up a grade in all their subjects and all the extra work we had done for our exams wouldn't be shown off and we had pretty much no say in what grades we got. All we could and can do is hope the work we put in was enough and pray.

At this point a lot of us were fed up with being confined in the same four walls and it was really beginning to show. I spoke to friends less and less and many didn't want to interact as they felt lonely and having to speak to over the phone and not face to face was just a reminder of how far away and lonely they really felt.

Fast forward and Boris had announced that lockdown would be being lifted slowly, This I think were the words of solace we needed to hear. Life started to feel (very slightly) like it was going back to normal. Non-essential shops are opening back up, we can visit family and friends as long as social distancing is upheld and many people are returning back to work.

As traumatic as lockdown has been, it is a time we should never forget, it opened people's eyes and gave modern day injustice the stand it needed. It gave the black lives matter movement the support and attention it has needed and it gave us as people no excuse but to listen to the prejudice faced by people of colour on an everyday basis. From Belly Mujinga, to Breonna Taylor to George Floyd and Shukri Abdi, to name a few names. We need justice and we need to expose and change a system that has been failing us because it was never built for us. As people we need to come together because all lives can't matter if black and minority lives don't. As a young person in today's society it truly astounds me to see so much backlash as people fight for their basic human rights. This shouldn't be a time for resistance and opposition but education and understanding and alliance. Even if you haven't faced racism yourself being quiet about it ISN'T the solution. The great MLK said "whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly". This is the time for long awaited change.

The movement may never have this much momentum ever again, be part of the change, not against it. Sign petitions, educate yourself, share knowledge, as he who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating.

With school being closed and education taking a back burner for the first time in a long time in my life, I was finally able to finish my book, start my business (@havannahx on the gram ;) <https://havannah.com/>) and pursue my faith as a Christian seriously. I took lockdown not as a time of being stuck but a time to explore my other interests and I hope you take the rest of this time to reflect, analyse and improve yourself because there's no time like the present, right?

Brook aged 15