

Pandemic Panorama

“Goodbye everyone, see you in two weeks.” Not two seconds, two minutes, two hours, two days... No, TWO WEEKS! “Dear parents, guardians, staff, and students, we regret to inform you that Alexander Hamilton Academy will be closed until further notice. We advise that you all take safety precautions for a safe and strong return to the building.” Happiness, sadness, relief, anger and regret all at once. How would you feel knowing that you won’t enter room 202 3rd period? What about playing jump rope with your girls during gym time? Playing Uno during lunch without worrying about who’s touching the cards, or yelling “UNO OUT” across the table? Normality? Gone.

The alarm is set for 6:15 but with nowhere to go. Saying a prayer so I don’t go insane. Turning pages in my Bible so that I don’t forget how to read. I won’t allow my spiritual life to suffer just because I am home. My navy polo and khaki skirt stare at me from across the room, waiting to be donned. My flats are ready for walking and my mirror is prepared for talking. But my attention has shifted to these stacked packets by my computer, in my bookbag, in a binder, in a folder, hidden under even more packets. My body fights the urge to move or turn off my screaming alarm, waking my sister from her sleep. We stare at each other realizing we’re both in bed, not jamming to our playlist on BET Gospel while getting ready for another day at school, filled with expectation. I finally get up, putting on my ugly white slippers and a quirky smile on my face. Walking down the hall I can see my Dad staring out the window while making music with his hands and feet, singing old Jamaican hymns, praises to God. Mom is already on a Zoom

call with her fellow staff conversating about their students. How in the world is this only day one?

Days go by, I sit at the kitchen table, reluctantly opening each packet. Counting the pages as days. Rewarding myself with a sip of my fresh iced coffee each time I finish a question. Sip, work, work, sip. Not as bad as I thought, but I should be learning this from a PERSON, not attempting to teach myself. We learned that we were going to be do online meetings since two weeks has become a two-month extension. While reading the discouraging email, my little brother jumps on my chair, wiping his tiny Cheeto hands on my back. I feel the urge to get angry because I was disturbed. I had to let it go though as the big sister. So, I obliged to keep up with his short dance party until he waddled away, and I got back to work. I would go outside, but there is a predator lurking around that no one can see, shifting plans and hiding faces, threatening our mental well-being. The Coronavirus pandemic was upon us.

I would be a liar if I said going through a pandemic was easy. From finishing seventh grade in packets, being fully remote for eighth grade to finally starting high school in person. I was not able to go to Church or even see my family. Somehow, I did not sink into the courts of depression because I always found a way to put a smile on my face and a song in my heart. Still, I struggled at times to keep sane and be at peace with the situation. Although I had my spiritual compass for guidance, great mentors for wise counsel, and other resources of help around me, I never reached out when these moments arose. Some days felt dark and others so bright, that I could not wait to begin. So, for those who struggled but made it out, it just proves that you were put through a test. Not only did you not fall apart, but you passed with flying colors.