

The Muckraker's Independent John F. Kennedy School Student

QVARRANZINE

Week One: Solitude



Dear Reader,

These trying times in which we are limited largely to the confines of our living spaces allow us to experience aspects of the human condition not typical for the busy, routine-driven life of a student. It is the goal of this zine to give students the opportunity to explore their emotions and experiences throughout this time. Each week we will have a theme to guide their work, through which diverse perspectives will come together to fill these pages. This week's theme is solitude: "the state or situation of being alone". Although solitude is something we have experienced before, We think the current situation will significantly affect our personal understanding of it. We hope you enjoy what your peers offer, may it help make the following weeks a bit funkier.

Next week's theme: *Imagine*

What does that mean to you?

Let us know.

"think happy thoughts"

easier said than done
when your own four holy walls turn from a
comforting sanctuary into a box that triggers
your claustrophobic tendencies
and your skin is no longer bestowed the gift of
feeling the four elements upon it

instead they distantly pass you by through a
cold glass window

until the grey seeps through the crack under
your door
turns your face ashen
casts a dull shadow over your eyes
and until your mind runs out of words
until then

"think happy thoughts"

Johanna Tigges

Fear and panic spread
Sitting in my room alone
Waiting till it ends
Anonymous



Stir Crazy June Gromis



Self Isolation Liliana Walker



Online School Ari Friedman



A Four Room Universe is Still a Universe

Opinion

It is evident to me that most students live a busy lifestyle. That is to say that the state of being routinely and monotonously occupied with something, whether it is school, schoolwork, or chores is what defines our life during this time. However, too many of us mistake this state of being for living. Being busy, no matter how important or necessary the act in question is, means shedding deliberateness and mindfulness from our lives. It is when a large part of this business and the routine that comes with it is eradicated that we are forced to grapple with what it actually means to exist in a state of conscientiousness. This is the situation we now find ourselves in, a state where the looming academic presence in our everyday schedules is replaced by a stripped-back, physically unbound version leaving us with free time that, as the German government ramps up Covid-19 prevention measures, grows more and more physically restricted to our homes. This leaves us with a kind of boredom reminiscent of being trapped inside on a rainy day as a kid. And although many might find this state of being dreadful, even depressing, I would argue we have been given an opportunity to rediscover what living should be, even under the duress of regular student life. Throughout our academic careers, we are told about the value and importance of routines, how they keep us productive and on the right path. I believe routines are counterintuitive to living, in fact they are often what keeps us in the destructive cycle of business that erodes our mental health as well as our humanity. It is possible to be disciplined and productive without being routine driven, and while those things are essential to being successful academically as well as in life, routines are not. The main poison of routine is that it creates a disconnect between us and large aspects of our everyday lives. Through routine, an action loses its intrinsic sense, its value. When the only answer to "Why do I grab a latte at this coffee shop at 7 am?" is "Because I always grab a latte at this coffee shop at 7 am", we are no longer being mindful, and therefore no longer living. Routine makes us unlearn something that I believe is at the very core of living: awareness, deliberation, mindfulness. Being aware of our surroundings, deliberating an action, and being mindful of how that action affects ourselves and others. So given our current opportunity, I'd encourage everyone to destroy whatever routine you currently have set up for yourself. Be aware that this doesn't mean

you can't set a list of things you want to achieve in a day, which is a very productive thing to do, just that you do not try to engineer the manner in which you do those things, or anything else, on a daily basis. So how should we conduct our days if not by routine? Well, the title of this essay might seem oxymoronic: a universe is limitless, while four rooms seem quite limited indeed. However, four rooms are just as limitless in possibility than any other space. It is when we reinstall awareness, deliberation, and mindfulness into our lives we open ourselves up to these possibilities. For example, if the first thing you usually do when you wake up in the morning is check your phone, choose not to. Do anything else, and boom you've already eradicated a million different versions of how your day could have looked and opened up a million more. Although this is a rather simplistic example, try to apply it to every aspect of your day. Whatever case you are examining, be aware of the usual, the routine choice, and choose actively to disrupt it. This can be as mundane as randomly changing the order of the things you regularly do in a day, every day, or as radical as my final point: making time for something new. It doesn't matter what it is as long as it's something you want to do. The beauty of having no routine is that you are tasking yourself with a constant stream of yes/no questions which you are deliberately and uniquely answering. Procrastination exists because of routines, not in spite of them. If we plan to do a certain thing at a certain time, then reach that point and don't feel like doing it, we usually don't. For some things there is never a good time, but when practicing awareness, deliberation, and mindfulness, you will always find the best time. Even when you have to force yourself to get something done, you are doing so conscientiously, which tends to be a lot more productive than trying to fill a time-slot in a schedule or ticking a box. Taking on these ideas and applying them to your life isn't easy; it depends on the amount of focus and energy you dedicate to them. If approached seriously, though, they have the potential to fundamentally improve your life.

June Gromis

Now it's Your Turn to be Considerate

Opinion

Climate Change seems to be the issue of our generation. Look to the Fridays for Future movements, the growing trends of vegetarianism and veganism. A 2019 study found nearly 50% of 14-22 year olds in Germany see climate as “extremely high priority” (1). The climate crisis is a generational conflict. The youngest generation will experience the worst of it if there is a failure to act quickly and dramatically on the part of government and individual contribution. But older generations will not be around to see the fallout many teens fear. We need these older generations to care. To have minimal consideration for our future livelihood. We beg them: listen to the science!

Young people are the ones setting the example of doing what's sensible in the climate crisis, but this new crisis is testing our commitment to that. The Corona crisis has snowballed into a pandemic, and much of our generation, which spends its time pleading with adults to listen to science, is ignoring it. The Robert Koch Institut has estimated that the pandemic could last up to 1-2 years and infect 60-70% of the population (2). If true, this could cost many lives. Experts say the most effective way to slow the spread of the virus is by social distancing—this means, if possible, no going out in public. It means shutting borders and shutting schools, a standstill of life as we know it. And it is such a pain— but slowing the spread of the outbreak needs to be a priority for all of us.

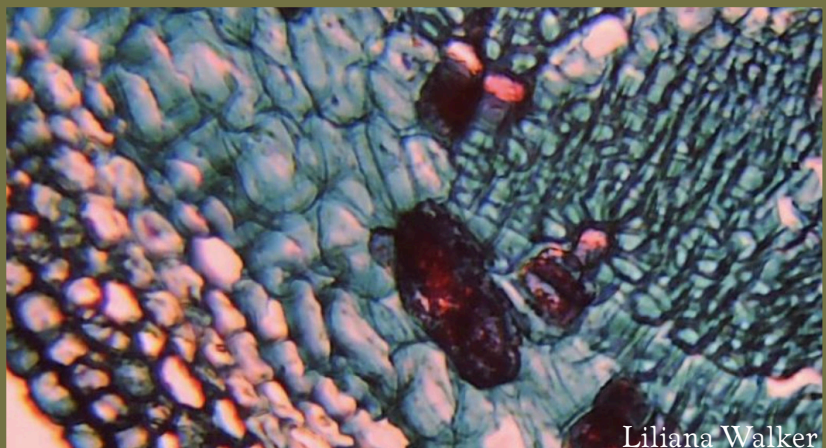
To be clear, there is no need to panic at the moment, as Germany's health infrastructure is one of the best in the world, and much more sophisticated than that of Italy, but we must still take individual responsibility and do our part to assist our medical system. We have the privilege that our government wants to preserve our personal freedoms as much as possible, but we must not abuse this liberty.

Social distancing is currently the most effective way not to overwhelm healthcare system and lead to unnecessary deaths (3). We should be taking the lessons we learned from the Fridays for Future movement and from the environmental mistakes of the previous generations—do not underestimate big problems until it's too late to solve them. Even if you are not at risk, your careless behavior as a carrier could have vast unforeseen consequences. Listen to the science! Malka Beere and Jakob Reuter



Brooke Betten

- 1 - Handelsblatt, 2019
- 2 - Merlot, der Spiegel, 2020
- 3 - Stevens, Washington Post, 2020



Liliana Walker

Visiting Empty Churches

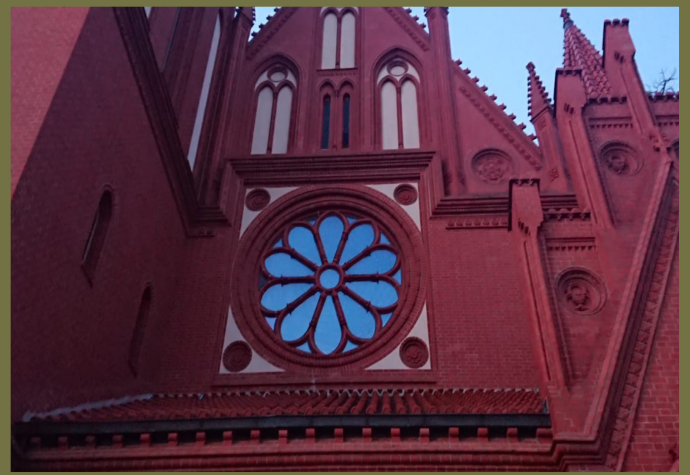
We've got a secret, me and him
"I don't know about you..."
He just shows me pretty colors
"Why would you do this to the world?"
He just shows me pretty shapes
"Don't you want your people here?"
He doesn't show me anything.
Maybe he just needs a minute.
I need a minute sometimes, too
And i'm not even nailed to the wall
He looks really tired

"Do they not know you're really tired?"
"Do they not know you need a minute?"
He doesn't show me anything
We don't know each other
But he needs a perfect stranger
So he can tell his secret

He doesn't know
Why did he do this to the world?
He doesn't know
How do we fix it all?
He doesn't know
He doesn't know anything!
His people made all his pretty colors
And all his pretty shapes
His people made him
I'm all alone in here!

We're really tired
And we just need a minute
Doesn't he want people here?
We made all these pretty colors
And all these pretty shapes
We made it all
We've got this secret, me and him:
We didn't make it through him
We made it through hard work
We made it together
We'll make it through this

Liliana Walker



June Gromis



They say the most precious part of a poem
Is the space between the lines
Tiny paper lilies that blossom and collapse
endlessly.
I say the most fragile part of our lives
Is the space between me and you
Cold night air that strokes your flushed
cheeks.
In my dreams:
I crush that space between our lips until it
becomes nothing
My heart lives in your heart,
My head lives on your chest,
Your perfume is the only thing I smell
Now:
We are only two girls sharing the silence,
Your thoughts hidden from me by the night
In the space between me and you.
June Gromis



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