

The silence was unusual to say the least.

The typical environment of NYU's Palladium gymnasium is hectic—the screeching of shoes on the hardwood is coupled with the buzzing of treadmills running and weights crashing to the ground.

But one email, sent by New York University President Andrew Hamilton on March 9, 2020, brought everything— at least momentarily— to a stop.

A student waiting to get on the court was scrolling his phone when he saw the email. He yelled for everyone to stop playing, for he had an announcement to make.

“Beginning on Wednesday, March 11, we [NYU] will move to remote instruction,” he said.

Some people recognized that this was the beginning of the end to “normal” college—a goodbye to routine, friends, and professors. While March 24th was the anticipated time to return to campus, that projection seemed unrealistic. The virus was already spreading rapidly across the country. Harvard and Cornell had already closed their campuses for their semester and forced students to leave within days. New York City is the largest city in the United States by population, a city that a virus could sabotage. The ambiguity of the entire situation wasn't cured with the email from NYU's administration. It was heightened.

The basketball court unites people of different races, ages, and socio-economic statuses. It is not unusual to find a freshman dueling against a third year law student, or a woman knocking down three point shots over her much larger male counterparts. The diversity, along with the camaraderie between the players, has always been a refreshing escape from my studies and other responsibilities. After the email was declared, we were not merely students in varying NYU schools, but young adults returning into the world to venture home.

For the first time in my life, I witnessed firsthand how varied each person's situation was and how important having access to resources would become in the near future. The virus doesn't discriminate against any socio-economic status, but it did seem to inconvenience lower income students more significantly than more fortunate students. Some students on substantial financial aid and food vouchers would be asked to move out of their dorm and travel home immediately. Access to wifi, too, would likely be a problem for students who had always relied on NYU's widespread network.

The news of the coronavirus sent the world into a frenzy and opened up a plethora of questions for students. Where would I go if I have to leave New York City? How will I keep up with my studies online? When will I see my friends again? For each basketball player, the answers would vary. But there was a feeling in the air that everything would be different.

“What are you going to do?” I remember asking a fellow student, Kenny Carvajal (Kenny G), who frequents the basketball court numerous times per week.

“I don’t know, man,” Carvajal responded, with a seriousness that didn’t reflect his playful persona. “I don’t have anywhere to go.”

After the announcement, which seemed more like an intermission, the game resumed and quickly ended with a team reaching fifteen points. Post-game handshakes were given and a little bit of trash talk was disseminated. But instead of another game beginning, the customary routine of the popular gym, every single person grabbed their belongings and filed for the exits with a distraught complexion. Some had phone calls to make. Others had plane tickets to buy.

But among the uncertainty the virus would bring, there was one realization that was accepted by everyone present.

There would be no more basketball today.