

The past two years became one of the most tumultuous and trying times of my life. Fear and uncertainty coupled with the political divide only exacerbated the unknown of the pandemic. Masks, virtual learning, and limited social engagements became normalized, and we became trapped inside the same loop. Nobody escaped the effects and we all were in a fight together for our lives. We had to get creative to survive this both mentally and physically.

I found that the fun things I used to do became very hard. I had to find a new normal so I found that I loved to go mountain biking and hiking with friends. I realized that we get so wrapped up in the routine of life that we don't take the time to see the opportunities we are surrounded by. I connected with my family by playing games, trying new recipes, and having discussions about things we wouldn't have time for before.

This new normal halted abruptly after the death of George Floyd. You learn about racism in school as if it's a thing of the past and that we all have evolved past these judgments and hate. The BLM Protests reminded us that it still exists and allowed me and the world to have conversations with their friends and family on topics that they would never normally discuss. I was faced with racist comments from my peers, and I would brush them off, but now looking back, I allowed a stereotype to continue because I didn't defend myself. I realized that these injustices happened everywhere and I wanted to make a change and give people a voice who usually wouldn't. I decided to do something and started an initiative to bring Cultural Diversity to my school. I realized getting upset wouldn't solve anything and maybe if people had more awareness and exposure around different cultures they would be more accepting. We all have the power to make a change if we are willing to communicate and listen to others. This horrible event showed me a resilience that I never even knew I had and I am striving to make a large impact in my community. These past two years turned our lives upside down but I know that I have come out stronger because of it and I hope through this awareness we all can make a difference.