

# Grads Reflect

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

## Focus on Less Fortunate

Despite COVID keeping me inside for the past couple of months, it has not affected me as much or as severely as it has others. My dad is still able to work and my mom received a stimulus check with a bit extra because she is caring for a dependent. Others are not so fortunate.

Focusing just on the problems of renters; some are able to withhold on rent payments due to the obvious. However, many landlords are not as caring and are trying to evict tenants. This puts renters in an awkward position because even if they go to housing court and win their case they will still be blacklisted in finding a living space in the future. Property owners don't have it too much easier. They have to pay things like the mortgage, utility bills and property taxes

COVID has made me grateful for how easy I have it. Sure like everyone else I'm at least somewhat inconvenienced. But at least I don't have to choose between feeding my family and paying rent.

--Ethan Gillespie



## The Memories We've Made

Not leaving the house had me attempting to clean and organize my space, but I became distracted by the memorabilia I deemed worthy of keeping. Most of these items are in some way, shape or form, related to my time at Jefferson. I've kept all of my old school IDs, ticket stubs from games and recitals, and even all of the letters and cards I was given throughout high school.

The handwritten cards represent a small snapshot of the love I received. They're from friends I've had since I was a child, friends I was lucky enough to make along the way, and from the amazing teachers who've dedicated their time to making sure we as students felt accepted.

The memories we've made over the past four years are not a small feat and should not be celebrated improperly or treated as a terrible distant memory. Of course, going through high school had tons of roadblocks and wasn't a consistent smooth ride, but looking back on that past shows how you've learned from those events and grown to the person you are now.

--Loan Pham

## Pandemic's Random Days

Staying busy has been my life. Because working is what gets you places, working is what will help you get to where you want to be in life.

For 18 years I have been told that life after high school just gets more tough, no matter if you go to college or go straight to work. But now that everyone from all ages is being stopped from working because of COVID-19, it provides a window

on humanity. Life isn't about working all the time. It's not about how much money there is in someone's bank account. It's not about appearances. Being around loved ones is the most important thing in life and this pandemic is proof of that.

During these days there is so much room for thinking. Some days it gets to me and other days it doesn't. Some days I think of world issues and others days I think of dumb things that probably don't matter.

--Emely Valenzuela

## A Year of Growth

More than anything, this year has been a year of growth. The world may never be the same as it was before this year; and I feel like that may be for the best.

A clean slate can be good; starting over and looking at our past selves gives us a chance to learn from any mistakes we might have made, and become better people.

This strange time has taught us a lot, even with so many people out of school. Because of the need to stay apart, we're realizing just how much we need the company and support of our friends and family. We're

finding out who we need to help the most because we're placed in their shoes, and the people in most need, especially poorer people and people of color, are being hurt right in front of us.

Examining the truths revealed to us by these unique and trying times will let us move forward into a brighter future; we can come out of this smarter, stronger, and more compassionate for our fellow man. 2020 has been tough, and it's certainly not the way I would've chosen to spend my senior year, but it's also a huge opportunity for big change and growth for us all.

--Emery Ashdown

## Missing My School Family

Does anyone remember when we couldn't go a week without a fire alarm being pulled and how much relief it gave you in the middle of a test or a rant from an angry teacher. Or walking up to the D-floor afterwards because you couldn't snag a ride on the elevator. Or how about the random dance parties on B-floor, the random group singing in the hallway, the long talks from Pettiford that you try to escape from but can't. Don't you just miss it?

March 13 was our last day guys. That was it. No more getting stuck in Mr. Dixon's office as he asks all these questions that have nothing to do with what you actually needed from him. Are you sad? I am. I'm also conflicted cause I'm usually ready to leave Jeff and now I wanna be in it. I miss the close bonds and relationships I built with people whom I didn't get the chance to say goodbye.

I miss my school family. I miss breathing in Jeff's unique scent. I miss sitting at my locker or visiting Dalton's room just because. As I embark on the next part of my journey, I will take Jeff with me, the good, bad, the ugly, all of it.

--Jalayah Jointer

## Reflecting on the 'What If's'

It isn't unusual for me to procrastinate. But because of COVID-19, I've realized that in my past I took time for granted. During quarantine, I've looked out my window and thought of so many scenarios. The sun makes me miss Peninsula Park, ankle deep in the fountain water. Or, the rain makes me miss board games inside the Middle College office.

I wonder how my days would have been spent if 2020 was like the years before. If a pandemic wasn't the reality, what would I've been doing? Skipping class most definitely. I would be in the halls eating food from Cherry Sprout or harassing Mr. Causey. Ducking and dodging counselors, because I don't want to talk about college. I was busy counting the days until graduation, now I wish I made the days count.

Quarantine has allowed me time to think about the adventures taken and the adventures that have been lost. Though I've focused on the what if's, I want to move on with the I will's. I cannot get back the time COVID-19 has used up, but I can plan for my time in the aftermath. I will make the most out of another time.

--Jayla Pride

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

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Jaylen McDonald (Left) and Alatini Mapapalangi celebrating a Demo victory.