

# NEWS



## CONTENTS

Letter from the Acting Dean.....	2
Rethinking Assessment Practices in Higher Education Institutions during Covid19 Academic Season .....	4
The Light of Lockdown .....	5
Strange Times .....	6
Growing Through what we are Going Through .....	7
Hermann Ohlthaver Trust .....	10
Testing Positive .....	12
The Rise of Online Learning .....	12
Ndinobomi Project – I Have Life .....	13
The Struggles of Lockdown .....	14
How the Covid-19 Pandemic impacted my Mental Health and my Phd Studies .....	15
Homeschooling with Mia .....	17
My Covid-19 Experience .....	18
Finding “I” .....	20
Anonymous Lockdown Story .....	21
Corona: What Is Fact? What Is Opinion? .....	22
Storytelling as a Rapid Response To Covid19 .....	24



IT IS IN **YOUR** HANDS *the fight against COVID-19*

# Letter from the Acting Dean



The coronavirus has disrupted the lives of everybody on the planet. This pandemic has changed the way we see life, teach, learn, work, communicate, shop, socialise, and exercise. Furthermore, our values have changed. The purpose of this edition of the Faculty Newsletter is to capture the COVID-19 experiences of both staff and students.

After the President's announcement of the Lockdown on 26 March 2020, the Faculty had to adapt, be innovative, and find alternative ways of tackling learning and teaching so that the 2020 academic year could be completed. In the schooling and Higher Education sector, online teaching became the 'new normal'. For the past 5 months, both lecturers and students have learnt how to conduct TEAMS and ZOOM meetings and how to communicate with each other through social media and WhatsApp. It will be a learning curve that will never be forgotten.

During Lockdown 5, the Faculty strategically planned how it was best to complete the academic year, leaving no student behind. Several principles were firmly entrenched:

- That the academic year must be completed by December 2020 so that our fourth year and PGCE students can apply for jobs
- That no student was left behind
- That humanizing principles be practiced and,
- That students must have multiple opportunities to pass their modules.

The Faculty knew that online teaching was not going to be smooth sailing as both staff and students were challenged. Staff members needed to be trained on how to navigate online teaching platforms. Many students were challenged as they did not have the resources available for online learning. The lack of devices and data was a major challenge that was exacerbated by the fact that there was no connectivity in some of the areas where students reside. A further challenge that students experienced was that their home surroundings and conditions were not conducive to learning and studying at home. One can only capture the online teaching scenario with one word—"disruption". How-

ever, every staff member in the Faculty is committed and all endeavoured to provide maximum support to the students. Modules were restructured and rewritten to accommodate students without devices. Modules were printed and these hard-copies couriered to students.

The President's announcement that students could return to campus was wonderful news. Fifteen percent of the Faculty students who were without devices and who were in their final year of study returned to campus. When the country moved to Lockdown 2, a further 12 percent of students have returned. The students who have returned to campus have access to the computer labs and have Wi-Fi access 24/7 thus enabling their progress.

Under the circumstances, workshops and staff development were not to be neglected. Workshops and training were held on the following:

- A digital online workshop on "*Decolonization of the curriculum*" presented by Prof Lesley Le Grange from Stellenbosch University
- A "*Multilingualism*" workshop presented by Prof Nokhanyo Mdzanga
- "*How I teach online*" workshop presented by Prof Andre du Plessis
- A two-day *Module Writing Retreat* facilitated by Dr. Heloise Sathorar

Furthermore, several colleagues participated in the COVID-19 Story Telling Project. The illustrated stories are currently in print and will be circulated to our Manyano Network of schools.

The Faculty is excited that Prof Denise Zinn, the former DVC of Learning and Teaching at Mandela University, has been appointed as an Adjunct Professor in the Faculty. Congratulations are extended to two of our colleagues, Mr. Obakeng Kagola and Ms. Pretty Magangxa, who graduated with their Masters in Education. And our congratulations are also extended to Mary Anne Laufs and Ntomboxolo Yamile on the birth of their sons.

Back to this special COVID-19 Faculty newsletter. Some of the interesting articles are from Dalvin Johannes, who



## Letter from the Acting Dean (continued)

is encouraging you to take this opportunity under Lockdown to read extensively, Kamogelo Thalitha Phasha is advocating that each of us exercise regularly, Aviwe Diko is requesting that at this time we show compassion under these difficult circumstances and Solethu Mgqamgqo has stated that her experience during lockdown was not pleasant for several reasons, however, she knows that this period of darkness will pass. Jackie Smith eloquently narrates her story of home-schooling with her 5-year-old, and how the two of them bonded baking cakes! Two of our colleagues, Dr. Vukile Tshazibana and Ms. Nozuko Rhayi, relate their respective experiences of being infected with COVID-19 and how they stayed strong and overcame the virus. Overall, every story has a very positive message and I am impressed and grateful to the students and colleagues who submitted articles for this newsletter. Your contributions reflect stories of resilience, personal courage, and hope during a turbulent pandemic in our country.

In conclusion, the past few months have forced us to be conscious and appreciate the air we breathe, to appreciate our family and friends, and be thankful for our health. We empathise and sympathise with those who have family and friends who have been infected with the virus or who have lost a loved one. Thank you for reading this special COVID-19 edition. Please stay safe, practice social distancing, wear a mask in public, sanitize regularly by washing your hands with soap regularly for 20 seconds.

*Dr Tulusi Morar  
Acting Dean*



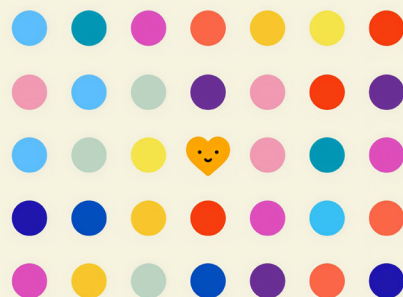
**COVID-19 does not discriminate.**

**Coronavirus can infect anyone, of any age.**



#### Share Kindness

We can spread kindness further than the virus. By helping each other, both locally and across the world, we can get through this and build the foundations for recovery. Contact the lonely. Look after each other. And listen to your government's advice on isolation and hygiene.



YOUR KINDNESS IS CONTAGIOUS.

DO  
YOUR  
PARTTWO  
METERS  
APART.

## Rethinking assessment practices in Higher Education institutions during COVID19 academic season

When Corona virus hit the shores of South Africa, the government declared a national state of disaster and adopted containment measures, including the closure of institutions of higher learning. Consequently, there was a shift to online pedagogy, which promotes, amongst other skills, independent learning. This meant that students had to stay at home, in that way, joining a society which is riddled with socio-political ills and filled with rhythms of constant social change. Since the country has and is still on lockdown, the question that remains is: what transferrable skills have students acquired pre –covid19 academic learning that will enable them to contribute to the needs of society?

One of the areas that is significant in learning and teaching is assessment. The ways in which assessment is carried out have implications for the students' future life and indirectly impacts the society at large. Prescriptive policies encourage a rigid approach to assessment that dictates what must be assessed as well as how and when it must be assessed. The diversity of students is in most cases disregarded in assessment practices as all students are assessed in the same way regardless of their background and the knowledge and experience they bring to the learning process. Ongoing discussions focus on such topics as whether a student's success in examinations relates to high standards, what assessment tasks are best for learning and whether assessment practices promote lifelong learning. Furthermore, it is common to see assessment practices privileging certain values, languages and processes. Currently, students are not part of the design of

assessment tools and negotiations regarding assessment processes. This contradicts the notion that humans are motivated by a need to reason and engage in the process of becoming (Freire, 1970) and also by McArthur's (2015) view that assessment should be understood as social practice that will contribute to societal transformation. For us sustainable assessment is a process where students are guided to make their own judgements about learning and their agency is developed so that they are not just passive students who have complied with rigid assessment regimes. In this way, as agents of social change and future teachers, they then become citizens who can negotiate, reason, make judgements, give and receive feedback. We challenge colleagues and students to debate and rethink assessment processes and practices used in HEI's. We ask the following questions: how can assessment practices and processes contribute to preparing 21st century teachers to be lifelong learners? How can lecturer's assessment practices enable student teachers to plan and monitor their own learning and make judgements about issues they face in their everyday lives? How can HEI's adopt assessment processes that are humane and take into consideration what students bring into the assessment process, what they do with assessment and what transferrable skills they can learn from the process which will enable them to be agents of change in society? These questions contribute to SDG 4: Quality Education, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

*Prof N. Mdzanga, Dr H. Sathorar, Dr Deidre Geduld, Dr Muki Moeng*



# The Light of Lockdown

**In this piece I will be critically reflecting on the effect, the lockdown period had on language, literacy and teaching. We will be discussing the most relevant resources that will help teaching and learning to be successful. Lockdown should not just be bad at all but be given the chance to be positive on what matters in life.**

Lockdown has hit the surface of South Africa. This is the opportunity for people to get to know their family better. Most importantly this is not the time for learners and mediators to rest. Although schools, universities and colleges are closed, these students should keep busy during this period. They must be reading books to improve their knowledge. Although lockdown has changed the way of teaching and learning, support increase for students to be successful. Now that students are learning from their home's they have the advantage of family support to be successful. Not all pupils learn better from home, because of challenges they might be confronted with at home. It can be said that the lockdown is not beneficial for every student in South Africa. Students from rural areas might find it difficult to participate in e-learning due to limit resources. Innovation to this new normal might be needed in such communities.

Students can use this opportunity to get multilingual by reading books and looking for alternative ways of doing work. Multilingualism can improve student's conception on difficult subjects. Parent's also could make their children understand concepts better in their mother tongue. It is also vital for students to improve their language skills during this time, because many students struggle with the

language of learning and teaching, which is English. A lot of television station are making way for educational programs to keep students occupied during this time. This is the new reality of learning for students. These educational programs are in place to make sure our students stay on track and to improve their literacy. Social Media became one of the largest platforms for mediators to communicate to students about literacy programs. It is safe to say that, the literacy of South Africa is in good hands during this time of lockdown. Government was also equitably towards students that does not have access to these platforms and resources, by giving them a chance to continue after the lockdown period.

Language during lockdown can be looked at positively and negatively. Positive side will be, we have time of our own to try and learn key words of a new language. There are various ways of learning a new language, like on a mobile device or a multilingual dictionary. The negative would be isolation, because we restricted to stay at home, and that make it difficult to engage with people speaking the language you might be learning. It can be quite tricky to also learn a difficult language without any practical advice from an individual that speaks the language. Although English is the language for teaching and learning, learners should be given the chance to explore on other languages. It can be said that children understand work better in their home language, which remains a barrier in schools. Students also now could become proficient in the language of teaching and learning by spending time understanding and reading books about

it. Learning during lockdown, I must say has become effective. Online learning is as strong as ever, which means lockdown was a positive for online learning. Government has put measurements in place to ensure learning during lockdown happens accordingly. Government also helped a lot of students with the necessities to over come this e-learning. Lot of programs is implemented for schools and higher institutes. This lockdown period has made sure that online strategies of correspondence institutes like UNISA have been strengthened, to accommodate those students as well. Government has not yet reported that the strategies for online is indeed a disaster for failing. Digital learning might even help children that has struggles with languages. Children with special needs might be slightly affected by the lockdown period, due to not having spe-



cial attention from their mediator. Although teachers must also adapt to this new normal, they still trying their best to accommodate every learner or student. The new normal is difficult for teachers and learners, but support from parents and the government, this period should be a success.

It can be said that Social Media is one of the most useful resources for teaching and learning in this lockdown period. Now that the government lifted restrictions, learners and teachers can go back to school. Is this wise during this difficult time of COVID-19? The question remains unanswered. All we can hope for is that teachers and learners practice the safety measurements to stay safe and healthy. Although there are many red flags for the opening of schools, learning, teaching and academic growth must take place. We need to be prepared for life beyond lockdown and we must be ready to move on after such difficult times. With an academic year stretched out to the core, it is important for parents and government to support the course of making it successful.

It can be concluded that the lockdown is not such a big negative for language, literacy and learning which means seeing the positive of the lockdown period will bring hope for success in teaching and learning. During this time, it is our responsibility as citizens of South Africa, to stay safe and adhere to regulations that are set in place. We should also stop let panic of the pandemic blind us to see the positive in the lockdown period.

*Dalvin Johannes, 218125607*



## Strange times

You won't believe how far we stood.  
We who stood so far didn't believe it too.  
You won't believe how somber the mood,  
as we craned our necks for lack of a decent view.

They said we couldn't come any closer.  
They said we couldn't touch the coffin.  
We couldn't look to be sure he lay inside.  
We couldn't put soil to soil and bid him goodbye.

We stood at a distance and disbelieved.  
We watched strangers play our roles dispassionately.  
They bent where we should have bent.  
They heaved where we should have heaved.

They did not sing our songs.  
They did not recite our clan names.  
We watched; we stood and watched as they did it all wrong.  
No one wept next to that mound of final soil.  
We listened and heard none of the familiar sounds at all.

We stood there, helpless in silence.  
Sometimes fear will not scream; we were silent.  
They played our roles without the proper lines and we were silent.  
They wore our shoes haphazardly in their hazmat suits and we were silent.

We stood still at a distance when they lowered that coffin,  
wrapped unceremoniously to trap some of the covid.  
We stood, there steeped in our silence and our disbelief.  
We watched and learned once more what it had meant to be free.

*Nduduzo Dube (July 2020)*



# Growing through what we are going through

**look back and ask myself how did I manage to get through the past 4 months?**

It hasn't been easy trying to adjust to the new normal.

Every day I wake up, pray up and grind.

Someday I just want to stay in bed and do absolutely nothing.

One thing I learnt is that 2020 low key allowed a lot of us to return to the self, therefore I think it was a blessing in disguise to look after ourselves, to appreciate and celebrate our loved ones whilst we can and take care of our minds, bodies and souls.

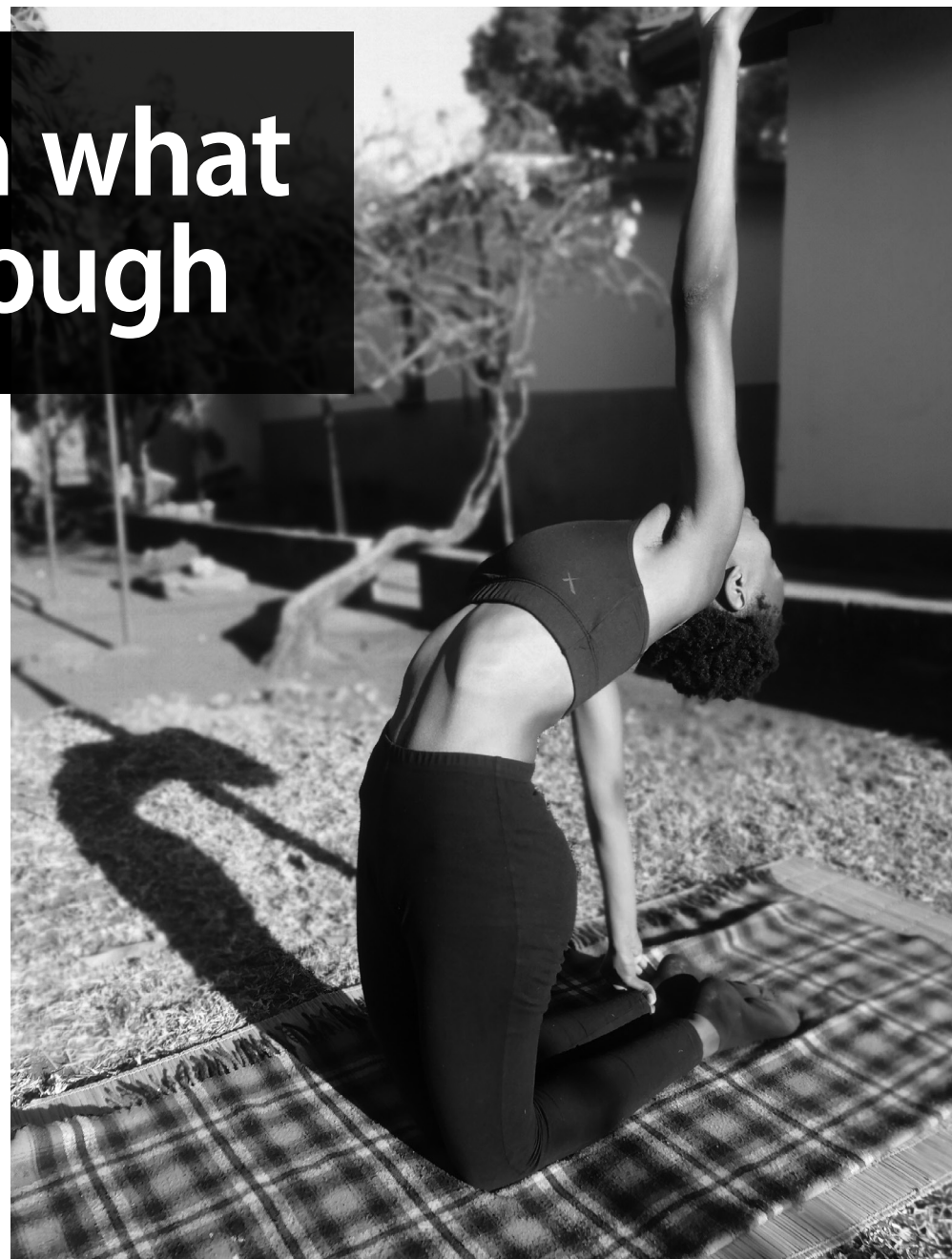
I found myself enjoying baking, embracing the beauty of nature even more, spending more time with my family, waking up every morning to exercise and embrace every new day without it feeling like a routine, because I am grateful for the gift of life as everyday in the news we hear that Covid-19 has taken one of our loved ones.

I am an optimistic person at heart however, the pandemic taught me to endure a lot of things such as not visiting my family, not seeing my friends as well as not being in contact with my lecturers. It was a strenuous transformation which I conquered through changing how I currently see things and to continue to be the

positive person that I am and every day I would post motivational quotes as well as my exercise routines on social media, because I did a self-introspection and realised that more people could be taking this pandemic worse than I am, therefore why not be the light that I am and leave a sparkle of hope and show people that they are not alone, we are all in this together. It took a lot of mental fitness for me to accept the inevitable changes, but what I am glad about is that most of my friends were inspired by my posts and engaged with me more often in how they feel and the progress that they have made be it physical, mental or emotional well-being and for that I am grateful. I also made sure that I go through my contact lists now and then, and if I see that I haven't spoken to someone in a long time, then I would check up on them to see how they are holding up.

I live by the quotes that says "We rise by lifting others" as well as "spread kindness like confetti", because I believe that sometimes we forget that pain, stress, depression and anxieties are not always emotions that are easily shown, therefore we need to handle people with care.

*Kamogelo Thalitha Phasha, 217175139*





We read and saw the news bulletin displaying the tragic, horrific, and dire consequences of contracting the Corona Virus. And as usual many South Africans took the COVID19 pandemic with a bit of humour and like many, I on the other hand thought this contagious plague would not reach South Africa. How naïve I was or was I just in denial and refusing to fathom the reality and the storm that was knocking on our door? Nonetheless, we live in a global world where we are unified by international relations and hence when the president of South Africa Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa announced that on the 26th of March 2020 the country will be under strict lockdown, immediately, there was a sense of rush and panic, uncertainty and fear of the unknown as tomorrow is not promised to anyone. However, what was inevitable was death knocking on our doorstep and in every household regardless of race or status. During this lockdown, COVID19 displayed the lack of leadership within our governance and how it is driven by self-serving intentions and corruption even during a pandemic. It also displayed how we as a nation, can be reckless resulting in more dire consequences. In a cruel and awful manner, it took away culture and religion as it made bereavement a thing of the past.

This was instigated on the night of the 26th of March 2020, it was announced that South Africa would be under strict lockdown. During this lockdown, I observed how quiet the streets were with the soldiers and police around, there was a sense of tranquillity and stability in our neighbourhood. There was no more noise of drunk people and students roaming around in the early hours of the morning coming back from the night clubs.

I wondered why our environment could not be like this on a regular basis, where there is peace, less domestic violence in homes and more present fathers in homes playing and helping their children with homework. Sadly, I got to learn that, in that first week of lockdown, it was reported that more than 87 000 women in South Africa called the South African Police reporting domestic violence. This

was truly saddening and heart breaking as I wondered and I asked myself and my partner so many questions but couldn't pin point exactly what the core problem is, but all I knew was that the greatest victims in all of this would be the innocent little lives that had to witness such a traumatic event.

I stayed informed with the figures of how many people have contracted the virus, how many have recovered and how many have unfortunately passed away locally and abroad. These figures seemed to be increasing drastically each day. Especially with the fact that South Africans were constantly not in compliance with the laws of the lockdown. I expected this as South Africans are a nation with humility, and ubuntu and this is reflected in the way we

it quite difficult to fight another virus attacking the body.

On a personal level, this period has been bittersweet for me because my partner and I were blessed with a beautiful daughter and things for me came to a halt as I also medically had not yet recovered. A month later I received news that my grandmother's sister who was 85 years old passed away. And my grandfather who was my grandmother's youngest sibling became sick after hearing the news of his sisters passing. He got sick to a point that he could not attend his sister's funeral. After we came back from the cemetery, my dad received a phone call that grandfather had passed away.

Immediately, I felt all kinds of emotions gushing inside of me. It was as if a dark cloud was hanging over our fam-

## Tomorrow is Not Promised

greet each other – there is physical contact, touching of the hands, an affectionate hug, and sometimes even kissing.

In addition, when you are out of sugar or maize meal, you naturally go to your neighbour to ask for a sufficient amount of maize meal in a container and your neighbour when they run out of something they do the same and come knock at your door for assistance, hence we have a saying that goes '*izandla ziyagezana*' meaning the hands and in this case people help each other. Therefore, if we were to quarantine or self-isolate, would it be a successful one also considering the living conditions of many South African as they live in clustered shacks and RDP houses where physical contact is inevitable, and if one person in these poverty stricken areas happens to be affected by Corona, they are bound to spread it onto their loved ones and onto neighbours, thereby spreading rapidly in these already vulnerable areas with people who have no medical aid, and some already have jeopardized immune systems with HIV/AIDS, TB, etc. Therefore, their systems would find

ily. This could not be happening to one family in a space of a week all at once. We then went to inform the family members that were at grandmothers house and then we drove to Wood Street where grandfather stayed. My dad and my uncle gathered a few neighbours (*abamelwane*). We were fortunate as small gatherings were permitted and the restrictions were easing up, hence *abamelwane*, our social anchors arrived suspiciously at the homestead. And even those that had not heard the news knew then that something was wrong. They came to do the hard task of consoling a family that was about to receive news that their family anchor is gone from the land of the living. This is what *ubumelwane* is for you. It anchors you in the time of grief. *Ubumelwane* carry our pain to make it lighter when death visits. Who will do this task in times of social distancing? When we cannot even hold to say "*Yini MamCirha do not cry and lose hope*." Indeed when the news were broken, our neighbours played their role and prayed with and for

*Continued on following page*

## Tomorrow is Not Promised

*Continued*

us. They gave us strength and they knew that they had to use the only language that can penetrate a smashed heart, the language of prayer.

The mood turned sombre and tense. People spoke in soft voices, eyes said more than what their mouths could utter. Grandfather's death lacked language. It was unspeakable. Mourning in the times of corona was a thing of the past indeed. Within a few days grandfather got laid to rest as well. His service also took an hour due to the new rules of lockdown as compared to the normal 5/6 hour service of our church.

Even though grandfather did not pass away from corona, in a family discussion my dad stated *"Death is going to visit every household, we cannot run away from this thing,"* right there and then I knew all we have is prayer because Corona has no race or class, we just have to be strong in our faith and as my partner said not point fingers at a particular nation as the cause of this monstrous and atrocious virus. We must pray for a vaccine to be discovered because so many lives have been lost already and many homes will never be the same again. Some family members got retrenched, some people who depend on day to day income like hair salon owners, mechanics and vendors were mostly affected as they could not put food on the table for their families and, worst of all, some households were left as orphans. Many families affected by corona struggled to bury their loved ones, some had to watch from a distance their father get buried. My friend had to watch as the paramedics refused to help his mother get into the ambulance while she was short of breath, only to receive a call a few minutes later informing him that his mom had passed away on the way to hospital.

Another friend of mine from Rhodes University stated in a WhatsApp status how his girlfriend's mother could not attend her mother's funeral as she had to quarantine and

her other siblings could not attend the funeral fearing for their health. He further articulated that there was never a time for the mattress story telling sessions. No biscuits or tea. No reverend or wise senior family armed by the power of words and wisdom. No. There was not any of that. Instead there was only grief, pain, and ridicule. The grandma's death certificate was delayed until she was buried because nurses feared to touch the body without protective gear. Her funeral parlour that she paid for many years even tried to refuse taking the body. Pain, ridiculous voice notes and shame is what happened. This is of course what many families that are affected by corona experience in the community.

He further stated that it is anticipated that we are going to witness more covid related deaths in the coming months. Death is literally on our doorstep. How will we process this madness when it visits us? What kind of people will this virus make us, if we will still be people at all? How are we going to cope with the reality that if one of us dies of covid-19, we may never be able to get near their body, let alone seeing it? What will be the long-term effects of suspending (*ukuzila*) mourning for the family and community well-being? These are among some of the questions that have been lingering in our minds and in dialogue amongst ourselves.

More sadly, adding salt to the wound, the current government administration could not be any more vile and corrupt as we read in the headlines how Ramaphosa's administration looted the R500 billion that was intended to give aid during this pandemic. We read how the black elite gave each other tenders in the health department while people who went to the clinics to get tested for covid, were told that test kits are limited and only given out if a person is showing severe symptoms of the virus. This was a reflection of how the black elite are self-serving, corrupt and are crippling the South African economy to the ground even during a pandemic.

In conclusion, what I took from this experience is that death is inevitable and unfortunately the poor class are

on their own. They battle with the inflation of food, transportation and medication prices. They are drowning in a system that continuously robs and deprives them of their human rights, leaders who claim to have liberated the oppressed are the very same leaders who are looting from the people during a pandemic while its citizens are dying in massive numbers. Poor people are swimming with sharks who are wearing suits. Furthermore, what I also took from this experience is that we should cherish every moment with our parents and tell them everyday we love them if not show them in our actions, because what I learnt from my friends experience of losing a parent, the most painful thing is not telling them enough how much you love them until they are no more. And lastly, as people, we need to get our priorities straight and in the process show compassion during these difficult times as death can make a person feel lonely, hence (*ubumelwane*) neighbours need to seek alternative ways of comforting each other in times like these.

*Aviwe Diko, 217062148*



# Hermann Ohlthaver Trust

The Hermann Ohlthaver Trust (HOT) has facilitated an increasing number of learner and teacher interactions in recent months. During the first term of 2020 more than 3500 learner contact sessions were conducted covering Computer, Digital and Scientific Literacy in 7 schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan area. This also included a number of key technology demonstrators where learners were exposed to LEGO Robotics, coding drones to fly circuits, robotic arms, coding Arduino electronics, Tanks coding, etc.

A Raspberry Pi (a low cost, credit-card sized computer) was also installed in 5 schools to serve as a WiFi hotspot in each school to deliver up to 30 Gig of digital content covering Khan Academy, Phet Simulations, Portable Apps, Past exam papers, videos, etc.. The Raspberry Pi was also used to re-energise a Tablet program for subject-based lessons and coding using Scratch.

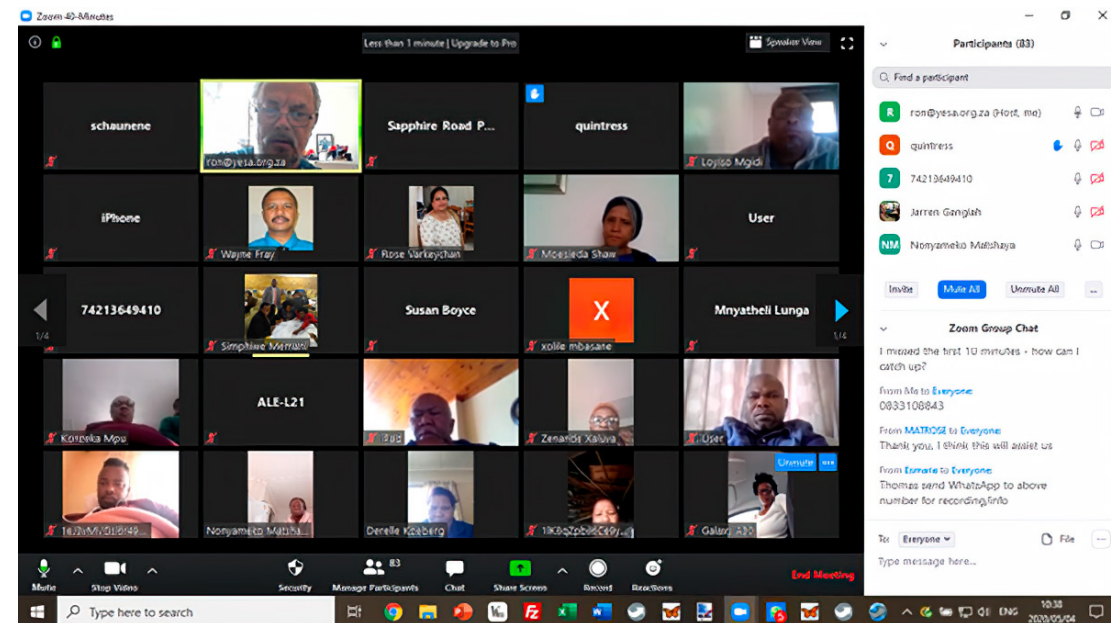
With the onset of the National Lockdown for the Coronavirus in March 2020, access to schools came to an abrupt end. Sadly, the vast majority of learners do not have access to data resulting in them being digitally excluded from further training. The net result was that training switch to a virtual format and invites were sent out to the 11 schools that we have been in contact with over the past few years. Dr Nico Govendar of the Education Department also managed to distribute the training schedules out to a wider range of schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan district.

The response was not expected as there were teachers from KZN, Gauteng, Free State, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. In many instances the classes exceeded the maximum number of seats for Zoom during the Office Suite training sessions. Timing was perfect to meet the needs of teachers during their down time. Many reported that they felt comfortable to attend using the Zoom sessions as they could simply listen to the training sessions in the comfort of their own homes. By the end of July there were close to 2000 teacher contact sessions covering a broad range of topics including Physical Science, Natural Science, Earth Science, Life Science, Technology Education, Mathematics and ICTs in general.

An e-Ulwazi Web Site (<http://e-ulwazi.co.za>) was established to host the resources that were developed for the training, ranging from single page PDF files to Voice over Power Point recordings. A Questionnaire were sent out to teachers who joined the HOT WhatsApp. The responses were used to gather and catalogue useful educational sites

which will direct training in the coming weeks to meet the needs of their specific requests.

Other success stories include a growing number of teachers reporting that they started their own Zoom Training Sessions and are willing to deliver content as part of future sessions. The idea is to use the e-Ulwazi web site as a resource for teacher by teachers. Support is also being provided to the East London Science College, Charles Duna Primary and Cape Recife High on a regular basis. Virtual teaching has also taken place directly into Grade 7 classes at Charles Duna. Future plans include conducting multi-classroom virtual sessions on a regular basis. Research is also taking place to use the Raspberry Pi as a local server to support multi-classroom teaching especially where single classes are split into 2-3 venues to maintain social distancing. The intention is to use the Raspberry Pi to facilitate this at no data costs. All learning experiences will be ploughed back into classes for NMU students.





The day it was announced that South Africa would be going under lockdown I was very happy and excited. Finally I was going home to King Williams Town and I would get to spend time with my dad. Indeed I needed the break because I felt I was starting to lose myself being a first year student at university and all. I always enjoyed going home to be with my dad because unlike Port Elizabeth, King Williams Town is a small quiet town where people spend most of their days indoors watching Netflix with some popcorn and that is my favorite thing to do as well! Little did I know then that this time of being under lockdown would bring experiences of darkness and times of pain in my life. Little did I know that it would reveal things I never knew about myself and push me to the lowest point I have ever been in my life.

The first few days during lockdown were good. I was very happy to be home and spend some time with my dad watching wrestling and action movies. I came to King Williams Town thinking that being under lockdown would provide me with the break I felt I needed. The Corona virus at that time did not scare me and I actually never gave it much thought. I figured it would go away soon and after the 21 days of the lockdown everything would go back to normal and I would go back to Port Elizabeth.

Lockdown was then extended and I still felt fine but at that point I began to miss Port Elizabeth where all my friends were and I also began to miss being at University on campus. I spent most of my time doing home workouts because I figured since lockdown has been extended I might as well take the opportunity and work on having a good and healthy body. Social media started to scare me as many people were posting content that suggested that lockdown would possibly be lifted next year. I began to find myself faced with so many house chores such as cooking, cleaning etc on a daily basis which ultimately resulted in me procrastinating. I wasn't able to do my home workouts anymore and started feeling drained and tired all the time.

## My Darkness during Lockdown

Suddenly things turned for the worst. One day my dad tells me that my favorite uncle has been tested positive for the Corona virus and that things are not looking good for him. Shortly after my dad tells me this my uncle passed away. I don't think I have ever felt so much pain and anger in my life. I felt angry because it was unfair that he passed away so unexpectedly and instantly due to Covid19; the worst thing was that I could not even attend his funeral. I was depressed for a while and with that came a lot of anxiety and panic. People I knew were dying and I was scared. I have never considered myself as someone who battles with anxiety but during this lockdown I have discovered that I do battle with a lot of anxiety. It feels as though a dark cloud is hovering over me as of lately I have been getting nightmares and my anxiety has been making me feel sad.

During this lockdown I have also been experiencing a lot of procrastination. It has always been something I have battled with but during this lockdown it seems to be getting worse. I have been procrastinating when it comes to my school work which always results in my last minute of doing assessments. I have also been procrastinating with doing my home workouts as well as taking good care of myself. I have been experiencing a lack of energy and motivation. As much as I have always been a procrastinator, I have never been someone who lacks motivation. Being at home all the time has resulted in having a repetitive routine which I feel like is the reason for my lack

of motivation during this lockdown. I have also been battling with insomnia so my daily routine would consist of me waking up in the afternoon and doing house chores for the rest of the day. This cycle has made me feel trapped, useless and frustrated.

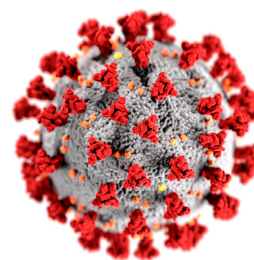
My experience during lockdown overall has been terrible. My expectation that lockdown would not last this long, missing my friends in Port Elizabeth, doing so many house chores, my uncle's sudden passing, the discovery of my anxiety, having panic attacks, my procrastination, battling with insomnia and having a repetitive routine has all contributed to my dark experiences during this lockdown.

This lockdown experience has taught me that life is unpredictable and short. It has taught me to always let my loved ones know how much I love them and how much they mean to me all the time. It has also taught me to always be grateful for the things that I have in my life such as loving parents, a roof over my head, food to eat as well as having safety and security because many people out there don't have these things and they are struggling more especially during these difficult times. It has also made me aware of things that I wasn't aware of about myself such as having so much anxiety.

This lockdown has made me experience the darkest time in my life but I know that after every storm, comes a beautiful sunshine.

*Solethu Mqamqqa, s223174823*

# TESTING POSITIVE



**W**hen I received that call on the 20th July from my doctor I never anticipated that he will tell me I tested positive with covid19. I had no serious symptoms but knew something was not right with how I am feeling physically.

Within few days of noticing that I am experiencing symptoms of fever, I started to get chills especially in the evenings. Fatigue followed with a splitting headache that will not allow me to even look at the phone screen. My body started to act as well with aches I will cough. I went to the chemist bought medicine especially the ones that are recommended for people who has the covid19 virus. This happened for about a week and I was so confident that I did not contract corona virus. I was so sure because I stayed at home and followed through with the regulations especially sanitization of hands and door locks.

On the other hand, my husband's symptoms worsened, then we each decided to get tested and, within two days we received a positive result for COVID-19. The call was so direct not cushioned it instantly made us depressed and sort of lose the ability to focus. My initial thought was death and how my kids will go on and cope with life without us. Then my faith and belief in God kicked in and suddenly I developed wings and I entertained thoughts of victory that we will overcome.

We sat with the kids with our masks on and at a distance from them and we told them. They were devastated did not know what this meant for them but we reassured them that we will fight it. We quarantined for 14 days from the day of receiving confirmation from the doctor. Health

Department called after few days as well to ask our arrangements to deal with the covid19. Now other symptoms developed like my husband had severe short breath and a pain and cold under his scalp. I must say for me the most upsetting symptom is a total loss of smell I call it a "hidden carrier" because a person won't be aware of it until they cut an onion.

I am experiencing a severe headache from time to time even though the 14 days of quarantine are complete and the smell and taste still have not fully returned. I now know that my immune system is much stronger now to fight all the underlying symptoms if there are any other.

Support is very crucial during this time and I had that coming from all sides, my family, Deputy dean my line manager Prof Nokhanyo Mdzanga and my fellow colleagues, Mrs Daniel-Smith and Mr O Kagola to mention the few. Prof Mdzanga will send pictures of recommended remedies and will check on us most of the time with prayers of hope. The support helped with my mental struggle and the control of my anxiety. I am grateful indeed to all the people who supported us and of course to those who heard about my health and prayed for our overall recovery.

In conclusion, I have realised that people don't realize how easily covid19 is transmitted. You can get the virus anywhere, any time and especially if you have a spouse or a person you stay with who does business outside the home. It's hard to stay home and keep your distance from others, but we all have a responsibility to be part of the solution.

*Mrs Nozuko Rhayi, RC Coordinator*

## The rise of online learning

**T**he rise of online learning during the Covid 19 pandemic 29 April 2020. The Covid 19 pandemic has changed education forever. Nelson Mandela University student teachers are starting to show their experience in using online education to all learners. In 2018 when we enrolled for teacher's degree the curriculum for teacher's degree changed to include the end user computer module. It did not make sense to us as students because we knew that in our schools (Black schools) there are no computers and even the teachers from these schools are not user friendly with computers. So what was the need?

Technology innovation will be key in the new dispensation and the learners will benefit from the skills we learnt. Education in South Africa will rise again because of the new curriculum that we as Nelson Mandela students we were using as from 2018 and the ways of teaching learners from the ground root level (Grade R) is in action. We will be the ones that will make our learners at school to achieve their goals. Computers will determine the strategic direction in education and get information from Google.

Personally, I feel I got a better student teaching experience and technology that I could have because education is all about being flexible.

*Busisiwe Msutwana, s9238271*



During lectures in Natural Science I introduced a simulation to demonstrate how the HIV virus could spread through a community as a practical demonstration. It only dawned on me recently that this same simulation can be applied to COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ndinobomi Project – I have Life – which is a simulation of how COVID-19 can spread through not maintaining adequate social distancing and effective sanitization.

Trials for this project have been successfully conducted in partnership with Charles Duna Primary School in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth by Mr Jarren Gangiah (Faculty of Education alumni) with exciting outcomes for Grade 6 and 7 learners. The outcome is that Charles Duna can be a safe space giving a better understanding of COVID-19 for learners and the broader community. This includes conducting the same simulations down to Grade 1 learners with their parents who will take the information and learning experiences back into the broader community. The latter will commence once schools return in August.

Essentially learners have to exchange a small amount of fluid (water) in a test tube as a 'culture of greeting each other'. Three groups are set up where one group has many

friends and they try to greet everyone. The second group are tasked to only make a few contacts and the third group are supposed to have no friends. One infected person with a test tube containing a 'virus' must try and befriend everyone in the time allotted (5 minutes). A 'screening' process allows for a visual indication of who is 'positive' as they return to the classroom.

The simulation provides the grounds for meaningful discussions around such topics as, What is the culture of greeting? What is social distancing? What is my ethical duty to protect my community? How can I stay safe in a highly infected community? Etc. All of this is relevant to the CAPS curriculum.

The Ndinobomi Project has implications for learners, teachers and communities across the globe. The instructions can be translated into any language where the chemicals used are also readily available. The life of every child and teacher is worth the extra effort to reduce the risk of the current pandemic. The challenge is to ensure that this project is shared with more schools across the country where partners are sought to achieve this.

*Dr Ron Beyers*





# The struggles of lockdown

The lockdown has caused by the dangerous virus known as Corona Virus. There are a lot of things which had to stop because of this virus. People had to stay indoors because the spread of the virus was quite high. Everything had to be closed-down and by that, I mean schools; workplaces; business and church. A lot has changed because of this virus, we are no longer allowed to travel, to go out without wearing musk and sanitizing a lot which is new to us. The lockdown has forced us to change our style of living which is staying home.

The virus has caused us as student to live school and go live at home. Before the online learning was introduced as learners we were in fear, fearing for our education, our future after the hard work we have done in making our dreams a reality. The spread of virus and the death of people were not promising that we will go back to school anytime soon. Sitting at home and doing nothing made me stressed and uncertain of my future, my future and my goals seed doomed because I don't know whether the virus might affect me but then at the end of the day our safety comes first we had to as student go and live at home.

The online learning was introduced to us as students having its disadvantages and advantages. The online learning renewed hope to student, a relief that we can study even in our homes and it decreased the pressure and stress that we had as student. There are disadvantages of this whole online I can mention children who live in small

homes which are very crowded which made them unable to work from home. Secondly some students live in deep rural areas where there is not even network; they can only access internet in internet café in towns. Lastly some do not even have electronics to use. So those were the challenges that we had to face earlier but a lot has been done to make sure that every student get education which decreased the pressure and stress that we had as students.

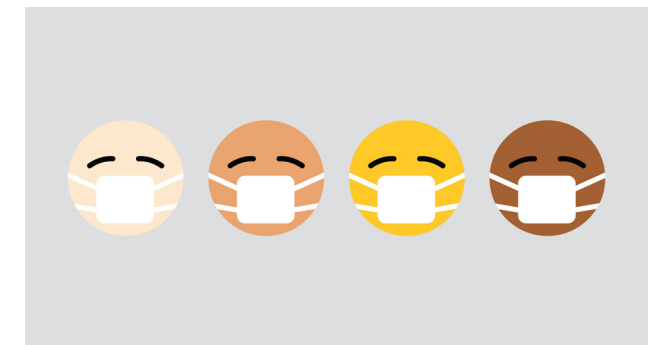
Unemployment has always been an issue in South Africa. During this lockdown it became worse, people were cut from work and they had to stay at home minding that they have families to feed. The stress that people have, worried about how they will feed their families. Most of the businesses were shutdown and that lead to loss of many jobs. In my home, my mother have to work as a kitchen girl in order for her to satisfy our needs and my father left when I was a little so it had always been my mother doing her best in making sure that we live. But now that its lockdown and people are cut from work. It's became difficult, we had to rely on my older sister who is a cashier in pick and pay.

Everyone is at home hopeless and worried about what will happen tomorrow and worried when one is about to travel that it can happen that he/she might be affected by this virus. This difficult time has forced us to adjust in new living, staying in one place is so stressful and being limited from the things you used to do is so mentally draining. The virus is increasing everyday and people are dying in a way that we are even scared to go to hospitals if we feel unwell

because we scared of being told we have the virus. In rural areas life is very difficult now, children do not have the materials to play with and they are not allowed to go and play with other children either. The long lines that we are standing at the end of the month to buy groceries are so tiring. It's hard on older people when they are collecting grant because they are too old to stand long hours. The are all worried about the virus on those lines because in month end everyone has money and our town is small it just become so packed.

There are people who still not wear musk of which they take things likely and they must be taught more about the virus. People need to wear a mask, sanitize, stay safe all times. This time have also made a good impact because we had to spend time with our families and we had to learn new ways to make our lives go ahead.

*Zizipho Cebisa, s220873356*



**M**y name is Silindile Malangeni, a second year PhD student in Education. In this section I will share how the covid-19 pandemic has impacted my mental health and studies.

The lockdown amidst Covid-19 has caused major disruptions in academic activities. As a postgraduate student, so used to studying in the school library and computer lab to avoid distractions at home, with research to work on and no face to face student-supervisor interactions to improve clarity on academic subjects, this change seemed impossible. I had no idea how this was going to turn out, whether I was going to be able to meet my deadlines. I had a lot of questions.

However, my supervisors made the transition to online supervision easy, they adapted wonderfully to the change

and made sure I was as comfortable as possible in this new normal. We have been extremely flexible with each other as we communicate via Zoom, WhatsApp and emails. However, it is incredibly difficult to focus on research when the physical and mental health of all the people I am close to is at risk. It feels like my life and career have been put on hold and waiting for the world to play back everything again.

The other biggest challenge I faced was the need to modify my data collection methods taking into account social distancing measures, because much of the participatory action research is generally based on face-to-face interaction for data collection through focus groups and field work. This then kind of delayed everything as the research ethics had to change due to Covid-19. This was a very stressful situation for me, but obviously manageable with the help and support of my supervisors.

### Management of depression

As someone who struggles with depression at times, social distancing for covid-19 has greatly tested how I manage my mental health. As a PhD student, my research at this stage is 100% screen bound and thus I could easily transition to remote work, however being isolated at home worsened my depression and placed a hindrance on my productivity. Ultimately, I realised one thing that I think we should all do, especially postgraduate research students, and that is to be kind to ourselves even when the research pressure isn't. COVID-19 certainly have been everything BUT kind. We have always faced pressure when it comes to productivity, especially those of us connected to NRF funded group projects. Much of that pressure remains during COVID-19 in the form of strict deadlines and internalised judgment for "taking breaks". We need to remind ourselves that a global pandemic is not normal and that it is okay if our productivity level is not "normal" In fact, to remain sane, we have to suspend our former definitions and expectations of normality.

Furthermore, we must keep in mind that, faced with the challenge of the coronavirus, the first thing we must



do is not to be anxious and we need to take care of ourselves. Realise that sharing our anxieties and concerns with our supervisors are part of what builds the supervisor-student relational capital; add to this the exchanging of ideas about what can be done with what is within our control, and you will find the anxiety being chipped away. Listening to their advice is essential. We must actively work to turn this challenge into an opportunity for success. In my case, I duly gathered my family at home into a simulated focus group and tested my data generation questions with them. I use the "lockdown" time to learn more about the literature, reviewed the methodologies that other scholars have used, and ensured that I sought feedback from my supervisors. My fellow students, we must be patient and strong. This Pandemic will end!

# HOW THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTED MY MENTAL HEALTH AND MY PHD STUDIES



**W**hen I look back at how I had envisioned my year 2020 to be like, it came out to be nothing close to that. I thought that it was a going to be a new year for better opportunities and a year to transition from high school to university. Instead, it introduced to us a policy named as lockdown. That meant that I had to be home and quarantined with my family.

Before I give a clear reflection of the undesirable events that made 2020 a revolting year, it would be amicable of me to explain what lockdown is. Lockdown is the confinement in isolation. People were restricted from moving around and engaged in social distancing. “Why lockdown?”, you may curiously ask yourself. At the beginning of the year, an outrageous virus known as coronavirus tried to overcome planet Earth. The best way to halt the virus’ spread was to isolate ourselves.

It was revolting to be part of this massacre. It has never happened in the history of lifetime that people had to save the world by staying indoors and doing nothing. This brought about a shock to many, including myself, and it is one of the worst things to have ever happened. It was terrifying to witness my life fall apart because of an illness. An illness that started overseas but ended up affecting poor countries, like mine, the most. This explains how fast spreading and contagious the virus was.

It seemed like the number of cases confirmed increased day by day. I remember how we went from recording 1 case p/day to recording 12 000 cases p/day. I thought that this life thing was done for me and I am pretty sure that everyone was left feeling this way. The increase in numbers meant that I was not allowed to return on campus. That is where the concept of online learning came about which I had known nothing about.

I was in a boarding school all my life, so I did not know anything about using technology

tools to study. We were not exposed to the real and advanced world. All we knew was being in contact with a teacher 24/7 and using a pen and paper to do work. It was quite stressful for me to cooperate with distant learning. At the end of the day, I had to put as much effort as I could because I realised that it is either now or never. I could never allow my life tremble whilst there was something that I could try and do. The effort that I put helped me get to point where I thought I would never reach.

Everyone, except essential workers (bankers, nurses, policemen, etc.), was forced to stay at home during lockdown. We had to have a good reason, such as going to the doctor, or permit to leave the house. Because not a lot of people are used to such, it led to violence (GBV) and abuse. How? In my conclusion, when people are forced to do something (i.e. stay at home) they develop stress. It is fair to say that we have different ways of dealing with stress. Some would take it out in the wrong ways, for example by beating up others, raping and end up killing them. Women are unfortunately weaker than men, so they were killed the most. It was very devastating to see what lockdown had led us to. It was a gift to come back home safe after leaving the house for some quick errands and for me that should not be counted as a gift. It should be normalised, like in most countries.

On the brighter side of things, lockdown left most of us with memories that we will forever cherish. It gave me delightful time to spend with my siblings and parents. I never got that chance before because I was rarely home. The opportunity of being home gave me the platform to help my nephews (that are in the intermediate phase) with homework. Basically, I was practicing what I am planning on becoming one day which is being a teacher.

I also got the chance to heal from what I have been struggling with. It is true that life can get so messy and because the world waits for nobody, people found it extremely hard to create peace especially within themselves. I had more than enough time to meditate and concentrate on myself. I then tried to learn new things such as reading, cooking, watching movies, dancing, karaoke, and playing sport with my family. Yes, nothing hectic at all.

Another thing that I am grateful for about corona is the time it gave me. It gave me time to learn how to cook. I went to university this year not knowing how to cook and a lot of money was spent on fast food. Now that I was home for three months, my mom taught me how to cook delicious meals that I will cook for the rest of my life. I cannot explain the joy the comes with learning how to cook.

It is a pity that South Africa had to go through all of this but at the same time, I am very grateful. I am grateful for the much-needed break. At first, I might have thought that this year was done and the worst, but I have hope. I am hopeful that this academic year will end and that this pandemic will end. South Africa will rebuild itself and the world will soon be a better place to live in.

*Thandeka Segodi, 223247561*





# Homeschooling with Mia

## reflections during lockdown

**A**s with everyone around the country, we were thrown into a spin at the end of March with the entry of COVID19 into our country and national lockdown. We went from the hustle and bustle of normal life to looking at each other with wide eyes and beating hearts in our quiet house.

But, life with a 5 year old does not allow for too much wallowing. They adapt and move on quickly, enjoying the present time whatever it may consist of. They question and interact and, whilst they may not like or understand everything about a 'new norm', they embrace and they have fun. What they don't do is question with judgement, anticipate outcomes or have a pre-conceived idea of what 'it should be'. Life is the present moment. A meltdown is about the here and now; easily assuaged and calmed with sureties and a hug. Life has not yet taught them to be circumspect.

As lockdown continued and we all sat in our homes and bubbles with so little of the everyday noise that we've always taken for granted, we set up for and adjusted to remote life. There was uncertainty as to our schooling situation as we are in Grade R, but we waited for guidance and plans. I was very concerned. Having worked in a Faculty of Education for years, and having friends who are teachers, I know that good foundations of schooling are vital.

Homeschooling did begin – and it is tricky! There are the anticipated challenges of juggling time, finding resources, interpreting lessons, attention span, etc. But we discovered some en route: how hard it is to be impartial to your child's work and responses (frustrated sighs and yelling do not make for a conducive learning environment!), how difficult it is to not interrupt their process and do the work yourself (I had to bite my tongue and sit on my hands!) and how easy it is to become lost in the world of YouTube learning videos (there are thousands!).

However, the most difficult thing I had to overcome was the crushing panic I felt when I realised that I was now in charge of my child's education. Not just responsible for ensuring access to a good school, participating in extra murals and overseeing homework, but actually guiding her learning according to curriculum outcomes. How could I ensure that I didn't do more harm than good?

I muddled through the first week, suppressing swells of self doubt and worry, wondering how other parents were coping. I reached out to Mia's teacher about a specific activity and her response was so supportive and calm that it managed to not only clarify the activity but to also reset my mindset. She told me to take our own time, nothing is absolute and that playing is learning. She reminded me that at 5 years old, all interaction is learning and that simple guidance, daily life skills and mindful presence goes a long way towards wholistic development. She assured me that outcomes and assessments are her responsibility and that no one would be left behind.

My friend who is a FP teacher and departmental head also shares her online video's on phonics, numeracy and perception – Mia loves these and interacts so naturally with the online content. I began to simply enjoy the time with my daughter, weaving each day so I could manage my workload but also attend to homeschooling. I marvel at the adaptability and openness to change that she displays.

I learnt that most parents felt the same worry and panic. I learnt that there is time for everything you need to do in a day. I learnt to enjoy moments of sunshine together on the couch without feeling guilty. I learnt to bake with a 5 year old (a skill!) and I watched her ride bike without training wheels. I've learnt to ask for help. I've learnt that kids already know a lot! I've learnt that educators are front liners during both pandemic times and non pandemic times, and how this profession fits in our society should change.

I count my blessings with a grateful heart.

Jackie Smith

# My Covid-19 Experience

**M**y Covid-19 experience starts when the virus was at its peak and we were all at a state of panic about it due to the number of people who were losing their lives to this virus. It was mid-June. I felt like I had flu. My whole body was sore. This was persistent even though I was taking medication. Things did not get any better. My head started to feel heavy and I also started experiencing dizziness. It was after I experienced more symptoms such as uncontrollable coughing, loss of appetite, slurred speech, finding myself constantly sleeping due to lack of energy, that I decided to go back to my health practitioner.

At this time, family members had also tested positive

for Covid - 19, and my doctor advised me to get tested too, and on the 23rd of June I went to get tested. A few days later the results came back positive and I self quarantined with immediate effect, and as advised, I followed all protocols while also taking medication and vitamins to boost my immune system.

Support from my family members, friends and colleagues, especially my line manager who was in contact with me every day, sometimes twice a day, was consistent. These made me strong and made me believe that the virus will be conquered. Some days were harder than others. The loneliness that comes with the isolation process is one that is indescribable, met with feelings of anxiety and

fear, are feelings I would never wish upon anyone.

Towards the 14th day I felt much better and was able to engage normally, but the anxiety and fear was still there. Counselling sessions were initiated by the acting dean of the faculty to calm me down and in order to cope with the transition from Covid - 19 to normality.

My sincere thanks goes to all those who supported me with prayers and messages. They strengthened me and made me positive right up to and after the virus was conquered.

*Dr Vuks Tshazibana*



**T**he COVID 19 pandemic has change the way of life. This new normal of life has made me value the time for family, as mine is in East London and the thought of not knowing when I was going to visit again has been daunting.

The value of wearing a mask when leaving the house to buy at the spaza shop next door and always washing my hands as often as possible.

Although this pandemic has been hard, it taught me to put safety first and value people around me when going to get essentials.

*Aviwe Nkonzombi*





# LOCKDOWN RELECTIONS

What a year, I honestly do not have any perfect word to properly define how I have felt about this year so far. It has certainly been a crazy, unsure time for everyone, especially students and learners. Questions like “are we going to fail this year?” “what happens now?” “are we going to get put through into the next year?” were being asked in many of my module whatsapp groups over the past few months which just created more anxiety for those with no answer. What I can say is that NMU has certainly taken the students feelings into consideration when planning for this unforeseeable year, or I could rather say the education faculty has done this. I have never felt more at ease and confident about the outcome of this year as a student in the foundation phase.

What worked well was the fact that our lecturers immediately insured that we had their contact numbers for anything we needed, whether it was questions on tasks, clarity, to talk about the way we felt about certain tasks or just to catch up on our mental health and if we were okay. Social media played a huge role in the success of this year. If it was not for the help of our module whatsapp groups I would have been so lost, alone and just unmotivated to do anything. My FP group became very close in these

unforeseen times as we all stuck together and assisted one another with anything we needed help with or clarification regarding a task that was given to us. Seeing what our peers were doing also kept us going and motivated us to do better and to work harder.

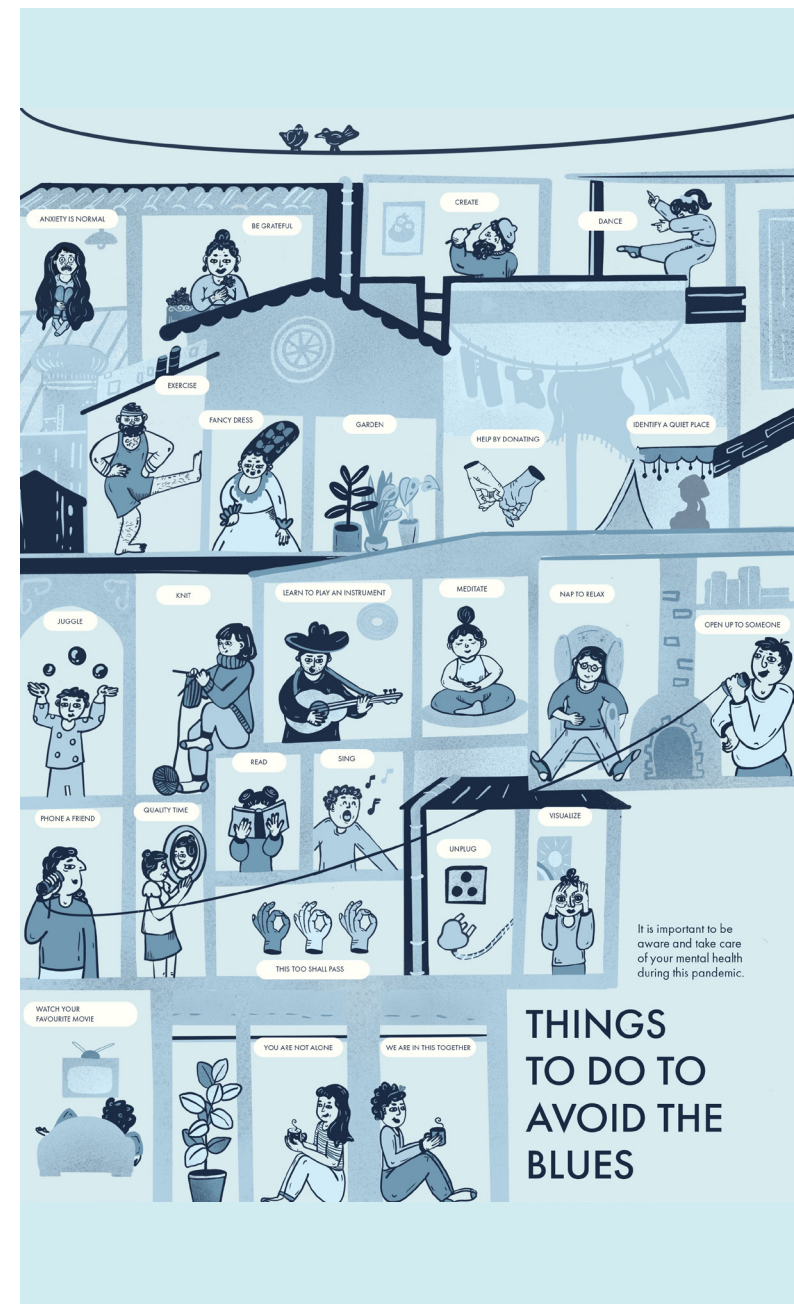
The only fear I had was not being sure whether or not I understood a task correctly and the anxiety regarding waiting for feedback. This was a challenge as you were not really sure if you knew what was going on until you received feedback for a task. This had led me to make a few 2nd submissions due to miscommunication on the expectation on an assignment or tasks.

Apart from this, I had still enjoyed my academic year and the care and concern received from some of my lecturers were amazing.

My suggestion for the future is to ensure and monitor that all lecturers are putting in the same time and effort in a faculty or phase so that we are not giving 200% in one module because of the massive workload received and 5% in another module due to no communication or work being received from a lecturer.

To my 2nd year Foundation Phase group, keep up the good work and we will make it together:)

*Zarah Domingo - 212269216*





I've found the I in I am, I have found purpose in an uncertain time filled with fear. Yet I don't want it any other way. I used to say I need a six-month holiday twice a year, not knowing it would be on my doorstep so soon. I am not leaving out of here the same. The lockdown allowed me to get to know myself and gave me a new understanding about myself. I went on a journey of self-discovery.

It was not my choice to travel back to my home town in such a hurry and with so much fear and anxiety. A place I referred to as my safe haven became the place, I feared the most. Oudtshoorn, situated in the beautiful Klein-Karoo where I was born and bred and where I had the most memorable moments of my life, soon became the place I did not want to be at. In fact, I did not want to be anywhere. I did not want to be part of this. I am a people's person, I'm at my best when I am surrounded by people. And then we went into total lockdown.

## Finding "I"

As I arrived at home, my family was pleased to see me and I felt a sense of guilt and shame as their happiness was not reciprocated by me. The first few days was the worst. How could I feel so sullen whilst being surrounded by all my family members? I have my mother, sister, aunts, cousins and nephews under one roof, so I have so much to be thankful for. Yet, why do I feel like I do not belong? Did I ever belong? As days passed by, I got use to the idea that I am stuck. Stuck with fears and uncertainty. Not being able to do anything has resulted in me always being in conversation with myself.

I use to talk to myself a lot. But this time it was different. It felt like a conversation that was needed. Having a very religious family I was always in the presence of God. It got annoying at some point. Don't get me wrong, I strongly believe in God. It is just that I have not talked

to him in ages. The more time I've spend in his presence made me realise how I was living for the moment. I was too dependent on the outside world that I have lost myself along the way without realising it.

I have lived for people and not for myself. Being in the outside world made me feel like I belonged. I was assuming that I was living my best life, while I was digging my own grave. I was too busy focusing on the world. That resulted in me loosing focus and drifting away from myself. This realisation has led me to find myself in a process of introspection. When limitations on my "freedom" was imposed on me I was forced to look internally.

The fear and anxiety I had for the lockdown quickly shifted to the fear for "I". Spending a lot of time by myself, finding myself again, having a close look at myself made me discover a strong, formidable young adult. I started to like where it all was going, being so close to myself felt great. It also gave me courage to be brave. This bravery helped me to confront my fears of searching for where "I" could belong

I literally went somewhere to search. I changed lockdown location which contributed to the fear I initially had. Leaving home, I felt like I was signing my own death warrant. I left for Cape Town.

Once again, I felt forced. Just when I got comfortable, I needed to leave again. It was for my own good. Having all my family members around me was good, but sometimes it can get a little bit crowded and it was not the ideal circumstances for me since we are switching to online learning.

The fear of death kicked in. Since the Covid-19 cases increased rapidly in Cape Town. I felt close to two things, close to myself and to death. It took me a while to adjust. Following the regulations strictly felt useless. There were several other people doing so and they still got Covid-19. I have accepted that it was just a matter of time before I got it.

But just accepting things was not in my nature. I should be more careful. Our two-bedroom apartment became my outside world. Not being able to go outside I had to create

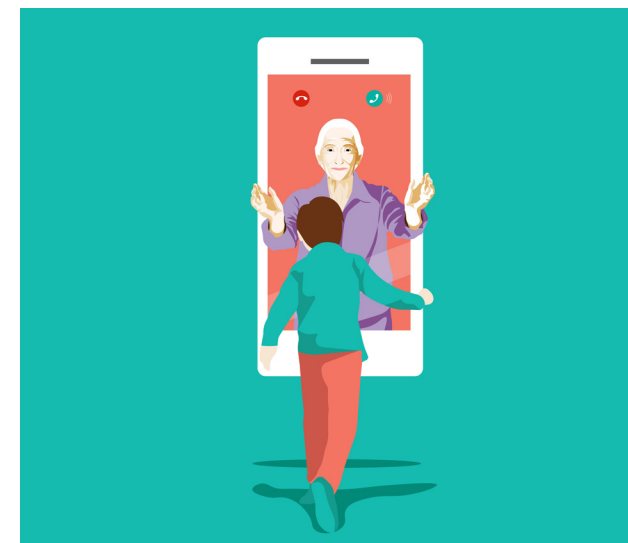
my own outside world. I started to decorate our place to give it a feeling of the outside world I once had.

I have changed. The way in which I communicate with the outside world changed, as well as the way in which we learn. Reading became fundamental.

I could not have imagined that I would see the day that we would be dependent on learning through Email, WhatsApp and various other apps. Having access to all the necessary items and products makes the process so much easier. It is not an effective way of learning, but it is working perfectly for me and I am doing great. The way in which we are learning currently are creating so much opportunities on how we are going to learn and teach in the future. It is going to give people more options for teaching and learning. A new market is opening up.

Although a lot has changed during this time, I am walking away with the best part of it – a step closer to finding "I". Entering lockdown, I did not know what was waiting on the other side. I was completely unaware of the other side. I did not expect to walk away with anything. And it was not just anything, it was a better version of myself.

*Georgie Rex (s221414835)*



**H**i there. In psychological terms, I have been diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder (otherwise known as Manic Depression) with just the smallest dash of Auditory Schizophrenia and occasional Dissociation. I have been hospitalized 3 times against my will and do not take medication or have therapy.

Bipolarism in a nutshell, if I could describe it. Makes you lose track of time. The world is either moving so fast that you are constantly trying to play catch up. Or your brain is moving too fast and world is moving too slowly for you.

A manic episode is called the happy mood, where you have a burst of productivity, energy, creativity, you are hyperaware of your surrounding and generally everything feels amazing.

Then you have depressive episodes, the sad mood. That feels like you are at the bottom of a pool and people are yelling at you from the surface, but you can barely hear it. It is harder to move because your body feels constantly heavy and all you want to do is sleep or lay down.

I have been swinging between these moods at random since I was 14 years and because of this I feel like I miss out on what is happening around me most of the time. Therefore I hear people call my name a lot and say things to me but there is never actually anyone there (Auditory Schizophrenia).

Disassociation is basically your mind suppressing traumatic memories to stop the negative emotions that comes with them. But your brain does it so well that it suppresses your ability to identify people or your surroundings. It can happen anywhere and anytime, and this reverts your brain back into a childlike state in order to protect you from yourself.

An average day in my life consists of getting up too late, rushing out the door, grabbing the nearest energy drink and getting on the bus to get to campus. Sitting through my mind numbingly boring lectures and going home, falling asleep and doing it all again the next day.

This was before quarantine.

Without being forced to go outside, to move your body, to go to places daily and staying indoors constantly. I have lost track of not only hours but days. To me, yesterday was

Monday, but today it's Thursday. I eat 2 meals daily and get about 2 hours of sunshine in a week. If I do not take sleeping pills, I will sleep from 6am to 8pm without blinking an eye and spend 5 days in the same clothes.

I feel like I am bombarded with emails and messages on WhatsApp and am constantly unclear with what is done and what needs to be done because all information is scattered.

There is a course module to follow on Moodle but not every lecturer knows how to use the site and therefore information is given out everywhere at any time throughout the day (yes, even on a Sunday at 3am).

I know that everyone is trying their best to play catch up to the rest of the academic year but for some of us we need a little longer to catch up than most.

To someone who feels like they are constantly failing because their own brain cannot co-operate with what needs to get done. I am eternally grateful to lecturers who have given us time to adjust and

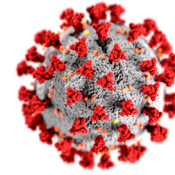
has met our mistakes and late due dates with compassion and understanding.

I thank you on behalf of anyone going through the same thing.

I just want everyone to know that they are not alone and to keep going, because you're never going to know what life has in store for you unless you live it.

# Anonymous Lockdown Story





# CORONA: WHAT IS FACT? WHAT IS OPINION?

## CONTEXT: EQUAL TOWN

“What’s wrong with the internet today? Everyone is talking about this Corona” Sam said while doing his daily-scrolling routine. “Where did it come from?” asked Duma. “China!” “That’s just fake news, as with everything that is exported from there.” Duma quickly discarded Sam. All of Sam’s social-media apps were exploding with people sharing Corona related news, His Instagram feed, Facebook and Some WhatsApp statuses were too worrying for him to ignore, but Duma had spoken and Sam thought back of the time he once bought the latest ADIDAS sneakers online, they came back spelt ADIDOES with a hard to notice MADE IN CHINA sticker on the inside. So if Corona comes from China, then as the sneakers, it should last for about a month or so. . .

A month later...

*...My compatriots, in light of the recent Global scare Covid-19, I would like to urge you to stay at home for the next 21 days.*

*~Your President: CR 19'*

“Duma, do you remember that time when you tried to convince me that Corona was fake news?” Duma just gave Sam a stare of discontent back and Sam knew that Duma would never admit to being wrong, so the stare was enough for him not to continue interrogating Duma.

21 days later ...

*My fellow South Africans ...*

“Oh, you’d better turn that thing off, Sam. Whenever he starts with that, we all know that we have to stay longer in our house arrest.” Sam tried his best convincing Duma that this was in their best interest as their well-being is important; but Duma wouldn’t have any of that.

“Sam, this is not something we should be worried about. I mean we have been through AIDS, TB, EBOLA, you name it, and still the world is running out of land to keep us all. And

did you hear the symptoms? Flu-like they say, now are you telling me you are afraid of a little cough? Ebola had people bleeding from their eyes, and it never reached South Africa, so relax Sam, we have nothing to fear.”

“Yes, I think I may have overreacted a bit there Duma, thank you for being so wise, do you know how this virus came to being?” Sam looked up at Duma with eagerness and desperation in his eyes. “Well, it’s good you finally realize how smart I am. You know how weird Asian people are with them eating everything from puffer fish to dogs, well this time they literally bitt more than we could all chew, they ate Batman, and now we all have to stay at home!” exclaimed Duma frustratingly.

“That’s impossible, where was his Bat-Mobile?” Sam asked despondently. “They ate Bats! Sam, stay with me here” responded Duma while fixing his collar to symbolize his genius.

Sam went on his phone again, and started Googling bats and China. He finally came across an article on the Wuhan market in China, the article had a video link which he clicked and saw the Wuhan market. The video was contrary to what he expected, it showed what people were selling there, and most of the food he saw was to be considered weird seeing that he was seeing it for the first time, oddly, there were no bats being sold in that market. He couldn’t dare tell Duma this, because he would now have an anger epidemic on his hands as well, so he continued doing his research in silent.

Through his research he saw that Wuhan had the biggest Biochemical lab in the world, he was intrigued, because the video he first saw showed how poor this city was, how was this possible? He thought, so he dug a little deeper. Sam found that this Biochemical Company was researching mostly Covid-related diseases in bats. This was only the tip of the iceberg, he saw that the scientists were mostly concerned about how these diseases can be transferred to humans. The leading researcher was a lady scientist, who



now, was missing. If only Sam knew how much brains he had, he wouldn't let Duma push him around as much as he does.

#### **NO POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES IN BEIJING, CHINA'S CAPITAL**

This headline shocked Sam to his core. Beijing is just four towns north from Wuhan, how was this possible, for Covid 19 to cross oceans and reach South Africa, Equal Town, and not reach China's most influential city? Yes the Emperors of the Ming dynasty who build it called it the Forbidden City. But the forbidden part referred to humans, and not micro-organisms. Sam's mind was exploding with questions.

"Duma! Come check this out" he showed him the article, Duma didn't even finish a paragraph when he started shaking his head and said "Fake..." "News, yeah I know" Sam finished his sentence for him. The virus was spreading like a wildfire, burning everything in its path besides those who were younger, and had no pre-existing chronic diseases. Some even called it the modern plague.

#### **ONLY FACE MASK FOR CHINESE PRESIDENT WHILE VISITING WUHAN TO CELEBRATE THE LIFTING OF THE LOCKDOWN**

This headline stunned Sam the most. "In the epicentre of this epidemic, and he didn't even wear protective gear, only a mask?" he thought to himself. When he showed Duma this article, he seemed addicted to it – after being glued to it for more than five minutes, he jumped up when done "I knew it! These people know more than what they letting on, it even says in the article that they have restricted their scientist from sharing their papers in international platforms." Sam stood up next to him, "But why, the most important man in China, why would he only wear a mask in the place where this whole shebang started?" Duma couldn't wait to give his conspiracy driven opinion; "That's because this whole thing is planned, he doesn't need to be protecting himself because he won't get sick from this, maybe he is already immune, they might have even given him the vaccine that the rest of us are still hoping is possible to make, or even better, the cure might be in his veins!"

"That doesn't make any sense Duma" Sam couldn't take it anymore, "That would mean that this virus was man-made, why would they do that to the world" Duma wore the Corona (crown) of conspiracies, so he had an answer for Sam's question... "A virus that is killing people at an alarming rate could be considered by the rest of the world as a pandemic, but could just be a population control measure for China!"

This was too much for Sam's ears, although everything Duma said was not backed-up by any scientific proof, it could be all from behind Duma's ears for that matter; but Sam just couldn't shake the fact that it somehow made sense, in the most despicable and diabolical way ever imagined. "If China invented this virus, then they also invented the vaccine and cure. Then if all over the world people are dying, it means that there is a global demand for any form of remedy, if China decides to share that it has any measure to counter the danger carried by Covid, then it would mean every country in the world would be buying this remedy from China" ~ Sam's mind ran, vigorously.

#### **MADAGASCAR ANNOUNCES: A HERBAL-BASED CURE FOR COVID-19**

It was Duma who showed Sam this headline. "Impossible! Three months ago, no one knew what this virus was, and now Madagascar has a cure? That's made from herbs, even? Come on Duma, even I can see that that's fake news." Duma was unmoved, calmly he responded "Is it too hard to believe that Africans are smart enough to use their herbal indigenous knowledge for a cure?" Sam interjected, "That's not what I'm saying, but come on buddy, really, a leaf against a virus?" Duma had never been this calm during any argument, in fact it can be argued that he had always been confrontational! But there was something scary in how calm he was "Sam, every chemical compound in the human body can be directly traced back to nature, meaning that the body is an organic compound, same as that leaf you mocking. And on top of that, all the pills in the world were made from at least one organic compound!"

"But it is a very chaotic time, Duma. No one actually knows what's going on..." responded Sam, "...if not the Chinese" — he finished the rest of the sentence in his head.

~A story by Freeman Black  
~10/07/2020



# USING STORYTELLING AS EDUCATIONAL RAPID RESPONSE TO COVID19

When a call on Rapid Response Research and Innovation measures against the COVID19 pandemic came out in April 2020, I thought it was an opportunity not to be missed. Universities had been requested to respond to this call in order to rapidly provide assistance to the public against the COVID 19 pandemic. As response to this call, a few colleagues and I thought about putting together a multidisciplinary project to respond to the theme on 'public understanding and awareness'. After a few brainstorming sessions, we agreed on a project that will provide an educational response to COVID19-and what better way than writing stories that could inform families on COVID19.

Through these multilingual stories (English, IsiXhosa, Afrikaans & Sesotho) we aim to educate and raise awareness about issues such as the importance of staying at home during lockdown, how mathematical patterns can be used to show how the CORONA virus can spread and so forth. We hope that these stories would inspire, motivate, entertain, educate and influence what families do during this time. We plan to disseminate the stories as follows: uploading stories online and link will be distributed to a network of educators and student teachers as a reading resource; donate stories to orphanages, reading clubs and schools; read stories in local radio stations, avail them as supplements in the local newspapers as well as converting them into braille and donate to families and schools for children who are blind. Contributors are: Prof's du Plessis, Khau, Mdzanga; Drs Sathorar, Geduld, Childs, Moeng & community members: Ms Gedze, Mntwini & Chizu.

*Prof N.N. Mdzanga*



**Misinformation** spreads faster than COVID - 19  
and could cost thousands of lives during the pandemic.  
**Think before sharing it.**



Newsletter of the Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela University