

"There were 3 deaths in my family this year including 2 close friends. Not only did my fiancé did not get to graduate from Palomar college this May 2020 with 4 AA degrees but also the 3 people who died do not get to attend what would have been my wedding date on October 4th, 2020 because the hall was shut down and so we lost money when we got all of our deposits back. No graduation, no wedding, and no wedding party. I am deeply saddened by this and my anxiety has worsen due to this. Going to sleep by 3 am almost daily is not healthy at all. "

-- Eric Noriega, Student, Escondido (Calif.), 5/04/2020

"Well... I think anyone can pretty much take a guess as to how a twenty-first birthday goes during quarantine. On the plus side, it was probably healthier for me, I suppose."

-- Anonymous, Student and CSUSM student library assistant, Encinitas (Calif.), 5/05/2020

"No one [sic] in my family has had any of these events during this time. Sheltering in place has made me feel sad that I can't see family."

-- Anonymous, Student, Riverside County (Calif.), 5/07/2020

"Recently I've celebrated three peoples [sic] birthdays, a death in my family and mothers day. I was not able to celebrate my nieces fourth birthday with her and got to sing her happy birthday through zoom. My family did birthday and mothers day parades drive bys, we kept the social distancing rules but were able to sing happy birthday and celebrate together. The death of my uncle has been really hard on me and my family but with my parents and sisters working from home due to quarantine it has given us more time to take care of my grandparents as my grandma has dementia and my grandpas old age."

-- Anonymous, Student, San Marcos (Calif.), 5/11/2020

"My grandmother's birthday happened recently, and we spent it at home. My boyfriend and my brother both have birthdays coming up soon, which will not be celebrated in the usual social settings due to the pandemic."

-- Hayley Stevenson, Student and undergraduate research assistant, Escondido (Calif.), 5/11/2020

"I was supposed to have my graduation this semester. It has affected so many aspects of my life, many that I probably have not realized yet. However, I will say just getting a few minutes of sunshine everyday has been helping me feel a lot better and be grateful that I am able to do this."

-- Anonymous, Student and CSUSM student library assistant, Los Angeles (Calif.), 5/12/2020

"Dear friends of mine have lost family members for various reasons, I was not able to hug them and comfort them as I would have liked. My grandmother is in another county and we were not able to see her for Mothers Day. I did use SHIPT to send her some items she wanted and flowers from Target, something is better than nothing. My mother, sisters and I had to do a drive by for Mothers Day for our aunts, but could not hug them or get too close. For my mom the hardest thing has been to stay away from her older sister who is battling cancer. They are best friends and would see each other regularly, video chat or a phone call is just not the same. The biggest heartbreak for me is that the college students and high school students that I work with will not be able to have a traditional graduation, if one at all. The end of the year festivities for my High School seniors were all cancelled with no virtual replacement as of yet."

-- Brenda Aguilar, Academic Advisor, TRIO Talent Search, Oceanside (Calif.), 5/18/2020

"I did enjoy the "graduates on parade" on May 15, 2020 because I graduated with an MA in History. Criselda rented a convertible, and I sat up and waved a CSUSM flag and enjoyed the line-up. My son Justin drove down from Los Angeles to drive the car. It took us an hour to get from the Ralphs Parking lot to Craven Circle, as the line wove back and forth in the big student lot E. I thank the staff and faculty who cheered us on, and they were at it for 2 hours!"

-- Michael Yee, Teaching Associate, Poway (Calif.), 6/15/2020

"My birthday is on April 1st, but April was not a time of celebration. It was my worst month, not only filled with sadness as more and more lives were being lost each day, but also due to other calamities. A dear family member had an accident and later died in hospital, with no family member allowed to be present to hold her hand. There was no funeral, no celebration of her life. We wrote condolences to each other by email. Her ashes were scattered out to sea from a naval ship. She is now in the spirit world with her husband, an ex-naval officer. About the same time, the husband of a close friend was diagnosed with cancer, while her son suffered a bad accident. And then a neighbor had a tree fall on her cottage, destroying half of it. Fortunately, she was not hurt, but two baby herons lost their lives as their nests crashed through the roof. April was the cruellest month."

-- Virginia Gabrielle O'Flaherty, Retired artist, San Diego County (Calif.), 6/26/2020

"I feel like I missed out on most of my senior year that I cannot get back. Seeing the grade above me have the time of their life knowing I wasn't able to have grandnite, a regular graduation and all the senior activities. My birthday was also back in June when rules were stricter and the outbreaks were worse, so I spent it with my immediate family, unable to do anything with friends for my 18th. Also, I feel for my cousin who has been planning her wedding to the T for over a year and has had to reschedule her wedding and all the venues multiple times throughout covid. It's frustrating for everyone, with all the hopes and intentions of special events coming up."

-- Anonymous, Student, San Bernardino County (Calif.), 10/26/2020

"I actually was so in luck because March 15 was my birthday and I decided to go out to Ensenada to wineries and some really cool restaurants with my friends and family, but the next day on March 16 was when they closed off everything and started to inform society about this COVID 19 virus. Luckily I had the opportunity to celebrate my birthday in a regular way, without mask or any of those things. But however, I am sure that these upcoming holidays will be an experience no one has gone through, staying home to keep our family and us safe instead of going out to watch the Christmas lights or go pick a tree out. Possible Thanksgiving will not be the same because obviously there is cooking involved and that can put everyone else in danger."

-- Andrea Caro, Student and retail worker, San Diego (Calif.), 10/26/2020