



USLM



EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITOR

Chitra Unnithan

Assistant Professor, USLM

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Rashmi Chouhan

Assistant Professor, USLM

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Khushi Shrivastava

Semester 4, USLM

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

Dr. Preeti Nakhat

Assistant Professor, USLM

STORIES WITH HEART

- Chitra Unnithan, Editor, USLM

Over the past couple of months, many students and faculty at USLM have seen Covid-19 change everything in their lives.

We invited our students and faculty to share their experiences and personal stories for USLM's May Newsletter and inspire us. We are overwhelmed with the heart-breaking stories of personal loss, of instances where our brave USLM community took the crisis head on and developed creative ways to help others, kept a positive spirit and much more.

We wanted the spotlight on these young people and how they thrive during these challenging times. If you are reading this edition, I request you to amplify their voices by sharing these stories through your social media channels.

USLM's May Newsletter is dedicated to the brave hearts, the fighters and the pioneers who invented new forms of solidarity at a time of an unprecedented economic, physical and mental health crisis.



I AM WRITING THIS FOR THE BRAVEST GENERATION

(A NOTE FROM A TEACHER TO THE STUDENTS)

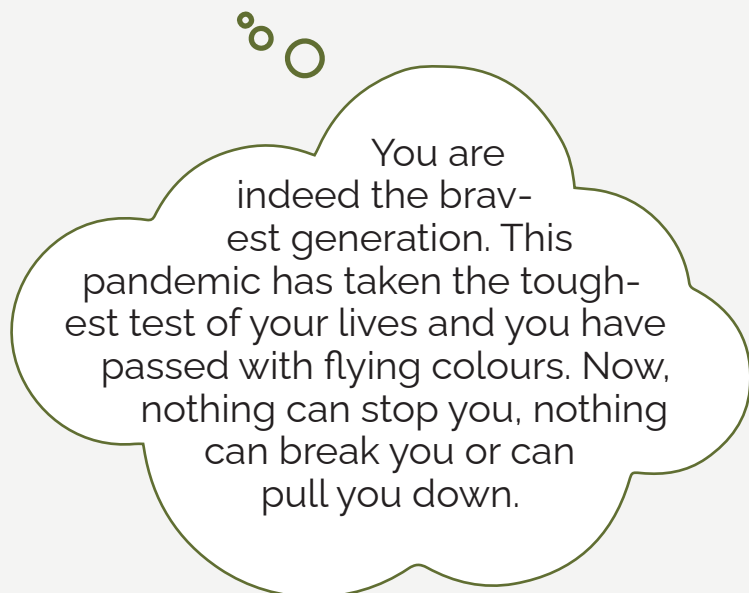
- Shraddha Sharma, Assistant Professor, USLM

I know, the past few months have been really challenging for all of us. It was something unplanned and nobody was prepared for this calamity. Everything was so uncertain and every morning was throwing new challenges. I could see only helpless, cry and devastated faces around me. I was on the verge of losing hope, and my mind and body were not supporting me. Seeing gloomy faces around and hushed whispers of loved ones was scary.

Yet, there was something that was keeping my spirit high. And that was you, the young generation, who is often criticized for being irresponsible. This time, however, you all proved everybody wrong. You showed how brave you all are. I have seen many youngsters running from pillar to post to arrange medicine, injections, plasma, blood, bed, oxygen, ICU. I have heard your brave stories that how some of you did community services, served food to the needy, drove hundreds of kilometers to help your family, how some of you could not sleep night after night because you were arranging injections to save one life and how you became guardian of your parents and were busy consulting doctors, asking for the well-being of your parents, replying the calls from hospitals. Some of you lost your loved ones in this battle and you just broke, but those dark moments could not hold you back for long. The very next moment you got up and fought for the survival of those who were fighting for their lives in the hospital.

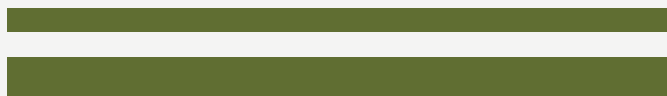
I have so many things to write but neither my writing skills are great nor I am good at expressing my emotions. I would just say, I am so proud of you. As a teacher, it is my job to inspire my young generation to learn and face life but this time you all have inspired me. For a moment, I tried to recall what I was doing when I was of your age but I couldn't. Probably I was busy preparing for university exams, or reading some textbook, or watching a random TV show, or was taking the help of others to solve my problems, but certainly, it was not

that significant or brave as you all have been doing. You don't know how you all have helped me to bounce back and face the challenges.



If you have survived this, you can survive anything.

Thank you for being so inspiring.



A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

- Ghata Joshi Bhatt, Sem 4, USLM

Maya Angelou once said, *"People will forget what you said, people will forget how you acted but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

More than anything, this pandemic taught me that as humans it is completely fine to reach out to people and seek help. At a personal level, I had many issues. I frequently broke down, I fought with people, I had anxiety, but I knew I had my parents with me.

Also, losing a loved one is difficult to cope with, but we have to live with the fact. It depends on us if we are ready to accept things, and how we choose to live.

The time is tough. And often I doubt my own survival. This feeling prompts me to invest time in myself and be grateful that I have enough means to survive — home, food, water, clean bed to sleep at night — in such a terrifying situation.

grateful

MY STRUGGLE STORY

- Hetvi Desai, Sem 6, USLM

Hi! I am Hetvi Desai, 20, and a citizen of India. My family pays all the taxes regularly. But when the time came, I was not paid back with the basic rights I ought to have. I am talking about the pandemic and the crumbling health infrastructure which deprived my family and me of my basic health rights to survive.

April-May was the month when India saw a deadly wave of Covid-19. In these two months, I realised this nation was only for the rich people and not for the poor or middle-class people. We all got to hear from different sources that there is a shortage of oxygen, hospital beds, injections, blood. Whatever was available was for those who could pay in thousands and lakhs.

My family's tribulations began on April 4, 2021. In March, we had lost a family member due to a heart attack, and due to Covid-19, we had asked the well-wishers to refrain from visiting us despite the demise. It was all in vain. A week later, my 11-year-old cousin caught cough and cold, and that was the very first signal of Covid for our entire family. Being young, she was taken care of by her mother, who followed all Covid protocols. Luckily, my cousin did not show severe and fought back the virus. However, five days later her mother — also my chachi — started showing some symptoms like weakness, loss of smell and taste, breathing issues, and high fever. She was advised to be admitted immediately.

Here, the war began. We wanted to admit her to a government hospital for good health facilities, but we did not get any bed. I started calling the hospital, but nobody gave proper answers.

I, then, took all the responsibilities on my shoulders and requested my family to stay at home and do not step out, as it was a peak time of COVID in the country. My family, anyway, does not have a good health history. My chachi was not unable to walk by herself by the time she was to be shifted to a hospital. I kept aside all fears, wore my gloves, full-length T-shirt and pants, and mask-on, helped her to get in my car. I drove with her to around eight hospitals in my Surat city but did not get a single bed. After four hours, I got one bed, but the hospital had shortage of oxygen. Still, I got her admitted there hoping that by the time the treatment



will start, I will figure out something. I felt nothing was too late. I got strength by seeing my chachi for all these four hours in the car. She was not able to breathe but still she did not panic and kept calm. On being admitted, the doctor treated her, which relieved her for a while. However, he warned that she won't sustain for long the same way. I called up my friend's father asking for the contacts who can help me arrange oxygen. I got the first lead in Tamil Nadu. Still, we were searching for a nearby place, but we could not find any lead. I decided to go to Tamil Nadu by road and get the oxygen. My parents were apprehensive how I would travel from Gujarat to Tamil Nadu and back to get the oxygen. One of my friends got ready to come along, and we went together. It was a 30-hour long journey. It was impossible to drive continuously, so we took breaks but did not step out of the car. I dreaded thinking my family stepping out for me just in case something happens to me. I was not ready for that. So, my friend and I carried a foldable tent house in our car, an electric stove to cook food, and things necessary for

survival. As we reached our destination and collected the oxygen cylinders, we still avoided coming in contact with other people. The very day, we left back for Surat. While driving back, many things were going in my head — chachi's condition, my classes, my assignments, and my internship. "How will I manage all these?" I wondered. Still, I ensured I did not miss my lectures. This gave me a break from all that was happening around me and helped me relax. I continued doing my assignment and my internship. At the same time, I was in touch with doctors to get an update about chachi's condition.

As we reached Surat, we rushed to the hospital and delivered the cylinder. My family felt proud and grateful. But the next day, the doctor called us up saying that she needed six injections as her condition was very critical. The second round of hunt began. We got two injections from the city, but for the other four, we had to again travel to Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. My friend and I carried along the same way as we did earlier, but this time the situation was far more tense.

I was panicking, but to keep myself strong, I started working on my thesis during my journey. I wanted to be calm and my work helped a lot. This journey was for 34 hours, but we had to rush. We tried to complete our one-way journey in 27 hours. We collected the injections from Jaipur and Gorakhpur and returned to Surat. These medicines seemed to have helped my chachi and she was stable in the next two weeks. After three weeks, she was back home. She had a lot of weakness and was strictly warned by the doctors to not come in contact with people.

Well, that was not all. Three days after chachi returned, my maternal auntie and uncle (mami and mamu) in Ahmedabad contacted the virus. Mamu's condition bothered us due to his poor medical history. Their three-year-old son had to be locked separately since they were left with no option. Neighbours often turned up for help. In the next three days, mamu's condition deteriorated with his oxygen level constantly dipping. By this time, I knew how to contact people. While being on back-to-back calls, I decided to drive to Ahmedabad to help him get a hospital. In the meantime, I also decided to get my cousin — he wept incessantly and refused to eat — to Surat. I left for Ahmedabad, took mamu to the hospital, and luckily this time I got a hospital with oxygen. Since his condition was critical, I preferred staying in Ahmedabad, but in my car and not in the house with mami. After two days, I got a call from the doctor saying everything was normal, but he needed blood. His blood group AB- was not available in Ahmedabad. After calling a few

doctors, I got a lead in Mumbai. Within two hours, I left for Surat with my little cousin tucked in baby car seat. Being in a car with a small baby was a huge task. After every one hour, I had to stop by and feed him, change his seat so that he does not get bored or cranky. The commuting time between Ahmedabad and Surat in a car should be a maximum four hours, but that day I took five-and-a-half hours to complete the entire journey with the baby. Finally, I dropped him at home and took rest for two hours after which I left for Mumbai for collecting the blood. The journey was of five hours. By the time I reached Mumbai, it was a late-night, so I parked my car in the parking space of that hospital and took rest for an hour. Then, I got the blood and immediately drove back to Ahmedabad. A day later, mamu was fine. As soon as the hospital confirmed his well-being, I left for Surat, my home. Well, here's an end. I would title this as my struggle story, but I would also title this as "realization". After these experiences, I realized how deplorable our nation is when it comes to health facilities. Collecting blood, oxygen, injections from other states and bringing it for our dear ones is not our job to do. It is our government's duty, which is dangerously lagging behind in that. Every time, when there is a discussion on Union Budget, health sector is hardly given any importance. We are a population of over 1.3 billion people and it is such a shame what we had to go through. The second wave of COVID was a huge slap on our Indian government. A slap tight enough to wake them is. It's high time!



WHEN HOPES ARE CRUSHED...

- Yuvraj Singh Mann, Semester 4, USLM

Coronavirus is an uninvited friend, an enemy in disguise. To be very frank, it took away my mother. My mother could not handle the pain in that friendship. I, on the other hand, was distressed and clueless. I lost someone who was so close to me... from where I came.

When she was in the hospital, she was scared and so was I. She knew that her end is near. I had the same feeling. I cannot see her bedridden for lifetime. I was praying to God to either improve her condition or just call her to himself. I think god listened to me. I am not broken. I am strong and recovering, as my mother had taught me. Sometimes, I am clueless but at the end of the day, I know I am the only one who needs to find a way. Hopes will get crushed, but do not lose hopes. This time shall pass.



LOVE IN THE TIME OF COVID

- Rashmi Chouhan, Assistant Professor, USLM

It was on the afternoon of April 16 this year, I got a call from a private hospital in Indore, where my father was admitted, for a plasma requirement. Every morning during my father's treatment, I used to wake up with a gnawing sensation in my gut wondering what would happen to him. He is 61, and had 65% lung infection. Despite being on oxygen and Remdesivir, his condition wasn't improving. Not knowing much about how to procure plasma and where to get the donor from, we started amplifying a message for plasma, just as we did for oxygen cylinder, oxygen bed and Remdesivir earlier. At every step, our hopes rested on those unknown Good Samaritans, who would somewhere and somehow read our messages and come to our help.

In the next two days, when things seemed a little settled, I put my curiosity to rest and started finding out everyone through whom we reached Parth, or rather, he reached us. I called up Parth, who told me that it was his friend Nikita Patel who reached him stating that someone needed plasma. I didn't know Nikita by any means. I then called her up and she said she saw the message for plasma requirement flashed in a WhatsApp group which she was a part of. Coincidentally, a day before that, Parth had spoken to her about his willingness to donate Covid plasma to anyone who needed it. She connected the dots and without losing a moment informed Parth about the plasma requirement by us. But how did the message reach the WhatsApp group? Nikita informed that the message was forwarded by a city-based journalist Laveen Owhal. He was the administrator of the WhatsApp group, which was also dedicated to helping Covid-hit people.

Such was his dedication that Laveen had impactfully rewritten the message forwarded by me, translating a part of it to Hindi for better reach. Yet, at that point, I didn't know who he was and how our request reached him. I called him up. Laveen said it was his journalist friend Tarun Tiwari from Free Press, Indore, who had forwarded the message to him. The picture was becoming clear to me. I had got Tarun's number from

Arvind Kumar, my colleague in Ahmedabad. The last thing I wanted to do was to thank Tarun and Arvind Sir. I did so. But there was still a missing link. As I thanked Arvind Sir, he told me he didn't know Tarun personally but got his number from someone. Who was this someone? It turned out that the person was Arvind sir's friend and an ex-colleague of Tarun from Free Press. When I heard his name, I couldn't believe the providence.

The person was Sanjeev Ratan Singh, my former boss at a leading newspaper in India, where I worked as a senior sub-editor and he as a resident editor 10 years ago. I got goosebumps. I remembered him as the coolest boss I ever got, who had helped us young journalists navigate through newsroom vagaries then.

Ten years later, he again helped me navigate through a tough time and helped save my father. I spoke to him after 10 years, with words falling short to thank him. I couldn't believe this chain of amplification and the unexpected co-incidents. These are the Good Samaritans of my story, who dedicatedly contributed to saving my father's life. In this time of crisis, when our social media chats are flooded with Covid news, data, and pleas for help, it was our fortune that this group of people noticed and remembered us. I have my gratitude for those courageous journalists, too, who are out on the field not just to cover Covid news, but to double up as corona warriors.

Now my father is back home, healthy and recovering well. The entire experience not just saved his life restored my faith in humanity by creating a chain of love and bonding.

(This article was first published in Free Press Journal)

LENDING A HELPING HAND

- Sahaj Pandya, Semester 6, USLM



dealt with its psychological trail even after the recovery. Not soon enough, I got to know from my father about a post Covid centre on Atmiya Vidya Niketan campus set by a socio-cultural NGO in mid-May. The free facility was set up for Covid survivors to recover mentally.

Volunteering for such a noble cause made me feel better. I started dedicating my time from 6am to 12am in the night at the facility keeping a record of daily routine check-up of patients by an MBBS doctor. I made sure that I get the update of every patient's health reports to make sure they were healthy and safe.

A specially-designed diet plan for patients was in place to ensure their quick recovery. The daily schedule was designed in a way that the patients stay active and fit, both mentally and physically. Engrossing them in activities like book reading, spiritual discourses, indoor games and many more, helped the patient grow mentally.

It was indeed an amazing experience to serve people selflessly.

It was the beginning of April, when the country was plagued by the deadly second wave of Covid. Phones and social media were abuzz with desperate calls for help. I saw the helplessness of the people running from one hospital to another scouting for bed and oxygen. Some were surviving, some fighting back, some recovering, and some losing their lives. The pandemic wreaked havoc on everything around us. For many, it left its mark long after the recovery too. Many dealt with the psychological trauma of seeing their near ones die, many faced the vicarious trauma of care-taking and many grappled with post-Covid psychological ailments. There was also a necessity to recover mentally and stay positive.

Watching the mayhem around was depressing. And I always looked for an opportunity to help those who may have recovered from Covid physiologically but



TEENS - BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, SMARTER THAN YOU THINK, & STRONGER THAN THEY SEEM

- Srushti Maniar, Semester 4, USLM

The ongoing pandemic turned the lives of teenagers especially those between 15 & 19 years of age upside down. They were confined to their homes, exams were cancelled, and their career path looked bleak. The lockdown was an intense, challenging experience, raising feelings of loss and fear about the future. However, many teenagers made an effort to show incredible adaptation & actively worked to counter the negative personal impact and inculcated positivity.

Illustrations And Doodles:

Teens sketched their feelings. It was a creative way to let out all their mixed emotions and doing something fun and creative.

Teens used the app **Procreate by Apple** and **Sketchbook by Microsoft** to draw these digital illustrations. They sketched symbols that help promote mental health, well-being & social change work during these stressful times.



Games, Games, Games!

Old traditional games like "Monopoly and Life" with family became a great leisure activity. This brought a lot of children closer to their parents.

Online Gaming:

Online games also brought a crazy amount of hype and fun. The famous game "Among us" made teens go mad with finding the imposter together. It was a very social app where people come together & become detectives.

Diary Entries

Lockdown Diary Of A Teenager:

Kabir Shah, St. Xavier's School, Ahmedabad:

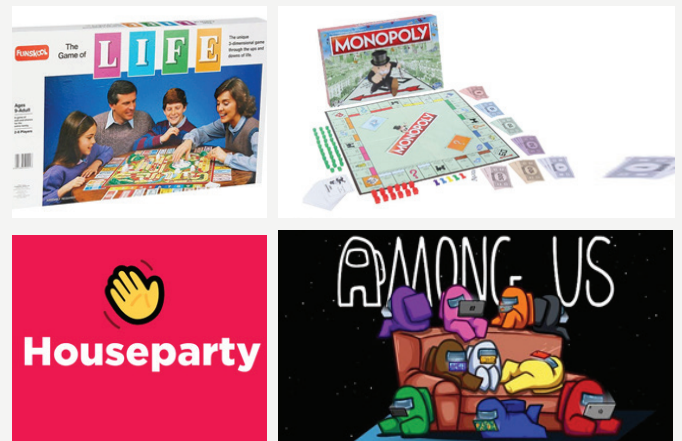
"WE TALK A LOT MORE NOW"

My life changed completely during the pandemic.

Earlier everybody was busy. We were busy with school & our parents with their work. Now, we converse a lot with each other because of the traditional board games we play at night. Now we are also part of the discussions.

Virtual Parties:

Teens hosted virtual parties with friends on **ZOOM**, **Google Meet**, & **Houseparty**. They created games together for family & friends who live far away.



Social Media Awareness:

Many teenagers made an **Instagram** profile for **COVID-19 Guidelines & Mental health discussions**. They created a safe space for people to talk about their feelings and circumstances. Many also provided contacts for COVID-19 resources, which was commendable. For example, @heretoohear, and @asafe-couch.

Decorated Their Rooms:

Many teens thought of using this time creatively. They brought out their inner artist and painted their walls and made cute artworks.

Started an online T-Shirt store & spoke about important movements:

Many teens also started their own online brands for T-shirts flashing motivating and inspiring captions to get through Covid. Check out **"Bonfire"**, and **"The Immersive Soul"**. Both the brands started on **Facebook**.

Bonfire:



Amazon Pantry just made things easier by providing safe online deliveries.

Thus, even though the situation was intense, the teens learned a lot of new things and understood what empathy is. They used their time very productively. Thanks to all the brands that were there to support them and their ideas.

Young people, when informed & empowered, when they realize that what they do truly makes a difference, can indeed change the world - Jane Goodall.

The Immersive Soul:



Started YouTube channels, made cooking music videos:

"I'M WORKING ON AN ALBUM"

Ria Chawda, 16, Mount Carmel High School:

Lockdown has been tough, but having said that, it hasn't been all bad. The fact that I can eat, sleep, make music at any time during the day (including school hours) has been great.

During the lockdown, I did not learn a new skill but instead tried to get better at the things I love. I deeply love music and spent a lot of time on my guitar and on my keyboard. I worked on improving my song-writing through **Yamaha's music guide & online lessons** & I am trying to produce stuff on my laptop. I should have a full album uploaded on **YouTube** soon.

Many Became Chefs!

Siddhi Patel, 18, Nirma University:

At home, we would take turns cooking dinner & at one point we decided to learn how to cook food from other countries. We drew the countries out of a basket, & I drew Canada one week & Mexico the next week. Cooking dinner became a week-long project and

COVID-19 AND THE CHALLENGE TO INDIA'S HEALTH SECTOR

- Assistant Professor Arjun Sidharth, USLM

With close to 300,000 officially recorded deaths due to Covid-19, India now stands among the worst affected nations of the world. The pandemic, which broke out in early 2020 has now engulfed virtually every region of the country, with some states affected more than others. While the nation stood resolute and alert during the first wave, the laxity which followed thereafter proved to be costly in hindsight. The second wave showed the ugly fury of the pandemic, with thousands succumbing to the virus amid a rush to avail basic medical services and facilities. If anything, the Covid-19 pandemic has completely exposed India's dismal healthcare system- the long queues of ambulances outside hospitals, the shortage of oxygen cylinders, ICU beds and vital drugs, and the paucity of medical staff to replace the overworked doctors and nurses fighting the pandemic are all symptoms of a deep malaise - the historical and continued negligence of the medical sector in independent India.

The Union government spends less than 2% of India's GDP on public health every year. State governments, barring a couple of exceptions, fare no better. This figure is grossly inadequate when considered along with the nation's burgeoning population. The statistic also pales in comparison to what other developing nations are spending on public health. The result is obvious. India lags on every single health parameter, ranging from Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), to metrics like the number of hospital beds per 1,000 population. There have undoubtedly been some stellar achievements on the way, most notably in immunization programs and expansion of health coverage, albeit inadequate. It is also true that every nation, developed or developing, has struggled to contain the fallout of the virus and India is no exception in this regard. However, the sheer affront to human dignity witnessed in these trying times should serve as a rude reminder of our vulnerability on the health front, and the need to rampantly scale up health infrastructure in the years ahead. Renewed focus on health as a matter of policy ought to be a positive outcome of this human tragedy. It took a pandemic to wake us from our slumber, and now that the magnitude of the challenge is evident, we would

be foolish and self-destructive to go back to a state of apathy and complacency once the storm has died down.





USLM

Karnavati University

907/A, Uvarsad,
Dist.Gandhinagar- 382422

Tel: 079 3053 5083, 3053 5084
www.karnavatiuniversity.edu.in/uslm

Disclaimer

The opinions/views expressed in the articles are solely of the author in his/her individual capacity.

They do not purport to reflect the opinions and/or views of the College and/or University or its members