

A Letter From The Editor

Dear Readers,

The Mike has been dedicated to serving student voices since its construction, and despite our current global situation and struggle, The Mike will continue to be an avenue for student voices and issues to be heard.

Since The Mike was formed it has been an integral part of St. Michael's College, and here at The Mike we understand the importance of continuing to represent and serve students especially during our current crisis.

As the incoming Editor-in-Chief I would like to say that on behalf of the 2020-21 masthead, we at The Mike are committed to representing not only St. Michael's College students, but also the wider community as we maneuver through this unprecedented time together.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and our community being so spread apart, The Mike has had to make a lot of changes. Regardless, we hope that you as readers and contributors will continue to engage in and be a part of these changes.

Unfortunately for the time being, The Mike has had to shift our focus and as such has made the hard decision to forgo our print copy of the paper. But, despite the loss of our printed paper for the time being, we are still producing and publishing all of our regular bi-weekly issues and content on our newly renovated and relaunched website.

In relaunching our website and newsletter, The Mike has allowed for more accessibility and inclusivity in accessing our bi-weekly content. With student life going virtual this year, it only makes sense that The Mike, the official student newspaper at St. Michael's College, follows suit. In saying this, while we won't have the joy of producing a physical printed copy of the paper this semester, we hope to resume printing some time during the new year!

We hope that you will all continue to stay updated with The Mike during this time and encourage you all to subscribe to our bi-weekly newsletter, and check out our website for all of our regular bi-weekly issues and content.

Student journalism is one of the most important pillars of university life, allowing for student voices to be heard, but The Mike cannot accurately represent the St. Michael's College community without our contributors. So, if you are interested in writing as a contributor or staff writer for The Mike this year, please get in touch with editorinchief@readthemike.com and managingeditor@readthemike.com

- Chiara Greco, Editor-in-Chief

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CHECK OUT THIS ISSUE'S FEATURES

“You Can’t Just Sit Around and Do Nothing”

Self-reflections on the side effects of social media during the pandemic and problems with amplifying ideals of hyper-productivity

Chiara Greco, Editor-in-Chief

The internet screams, “you can’t just sit around and do nothing for all these months! Sure there’s a global pandemic going on but that doesn’t mean you can just stop being productive, you can’t just be lazy.” Well, actually I can. You see, the internet has this funny way about it; it seems to make you feel guilty for taking care of yourself.

When the world was struck with a global pandemic causing Canadians to go into lockdown and quarantine in mid-March our lives inevitably went through extreme turmoil, change, and for some trauma. Though, it would be remiss to not start this discussion by acknowledging the privilege this discourse has. The COVID-19 pandemic, to put it bluntly, has immensely changed the lives of quite literally everyone on a global scale. While this article will not be discussing the great loss, trauma, and fear this pandemic has brought about, it seems wrong not to at least acknowledge it before taking on a bit of a lighter debate.

Now, while I cannot speak for everyone here, I can generally say that most people’s lives have gone through immense change. Nearly all of this change has been plastered across social media in ways which perpetuate some rather unkind trends. The language social media uses and has used to speak about the pandemic and our role in being ‘normal’ or productive during it has had some rough side-effects. Social media has illus-

trated this time in lockdown as ‘time off.’ Or as a chance to finally be productive with no worries of work or school deadlines. If we go even deeper, some social media platforms, such as Twitter, specifically have worked to establish a sort of capitalist notion of productivity, when in such a stressful time, people should be stepping back to relax and take a break. It seemed to me, at least, that when things started to go into lockdown, especially when businesses began to close, and schools shut down, people pushed for this idea of hyper-productivity; an idea that perpetuates the capitalist motto ‘you are what you do,’ or in other words, the idea that even though your workplace has closed, doesn’t mean you should just stop working.

At the beginning of my quarantine in mid-March and early April, this capitalistic idea that we all need to immediately be productive, to use this so-called ‘time off’ wisely, was constantly ringing in my ears. After all, Shakespeare wrote some of his best plays while he was in lockdown during the plague, so what’s stopping us? Well, to put it simply: a lot. I mean, our world today is immensely different from Shakespeare’s world when he apparently wrote King Lear or Macbeth. Our dependence on the internet has become like a little devil perched on our shoulders showing us all the people putting their time to ‘use’ while we sit and scroll through their ‘achievements.’ Sure, social media has always been this way, but the

effect of amplifying ideals of hyper-productivity and self comparison seemed more apparent than ever. Each time I logged on, I’d be barraged with pictures and texts of people finally dusting off that old screenplay they never finished, or people preaching about the importance of remaining ‘busy.’ This narrative of the hyper-productive day, all while battling a global pandemic and uncertain future, seemed so far-fetched and harmful to me. Hyper-productivity is not a new concept, and is definitely familiar to many students; it can be understood as the incessant need to always be busy. The hyper-productive day, quite like the capitalist’s day, does not allow for breaks or ‘time wasted.’ More often than not, hyper-productivity is damaging, leading to burnouts, another term students know all too well . . .

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Reducing The Distance

Reflections on online learning

Sana Mohsin, Managing Editor

My last Saturday in Toronto was spent cramped in a dorm room with friends, listening to loud desi music and snacking on ketchup crisps, unsure really of the situation. Campus had just closed yesterday, the last out of all the universities in Toronto, and we were waiting, uncertain of what exactly we expected to happen. A laptop was open to the UofT Outlook homepage, so that no email announcing sudden changes would go unmissed.

We didn’t know that this would be the last time we would all physically be together for many, many months. We also didn’t know that in just another day, some of us would book tickets across the globe to get back home, frantically packing away our lives in Toronto in cardboard boxes. In hindsight, I was one of the lucky ones who found a flight to Lahore, Pakistan before they shut off international travel for good, and was able to quarantine at home at the nick of time, while some were forced to stay behind. I arrived in my hometown amidst fear, distrust, and general confusion, stuck inside for many months to come. With the health of my family members and friends my top priority, and with mis-information about Covid-19 running rampant in Whatsapp forwards, finishing my third year of university was admittedly the least of my worries: probably why it passed by in such a

daze. My winter semester professors were kind enough to go out of their way to accommodate us, so I didn’t get my first taste of online, distance-based learning until summer courses began.

It wasn’t fun, to put it mildly; when I half-hazardly finished the final exam near the end of August, my exhaustion completely shut me down, and I slept eleven straight hours. In May, I jumped at the chance of being able to complete a tough required course in the comfort of my home, but had underestimated just how tough the home environment would prove to be.

Before having to switch to online classes, I had never dwelled on the affect a campus environment has on an institution’s students. I’ve lived on campus my past few years at UofT, a building filled with students working hard in different corners, usually until the early hours of the night. It was convenient to form study groups, even with people who weren’t in the same program as you, convenient to visit a coffee-shop or make Tim Horton’s runs even when every person had a different, precise order.

At the heart of it, I guess what I’m saying is that I miss hanging out with my friends, I miss being able to study with my friends. At a fast-paced, some-

times unfairly demanding institution like UofT, it made things easier to be around people who understand what you are going through. You realize how much you appreciate the people who could offer useful advice and encouragement when an 11:59pm deadline looms over your head. Quarantine has heightened our awareness of the essentiality of community, especially as students who have requirements to meet, degrees to complete.

It’s reassuring to know that I wasn’t alone in my ordeal: the lack of motivation, the dramatic time-differences, the miscommunication online. Isha Khurram, a third-year Cognitive Science major, was forced to stay in Toronto away from her family in Saudi Arabia due to closures. Discussing her choice to take online classes, she says . . .

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