

Not everyone in the world is feeling the same as you.

On one of my first days studying at UBC Okanagan, I came across a message campaign on campus. These messages were focused on creating people's awareness regarding the COVID pandemic. I agreed with the majority until I read one that caught my attention: Everyone in the world is feeling the same as you.

I fully understand the good intentions behind this campaign. It could be said that this pandemic has affected us all. None of us have been saved. However, I am afraid I disagree with this phrase. Not everyone in the world is feeling the same as you.

I will briefly explain how the pandemic has affected me, so you are able to better understand my opinion. I was studying at an international boarding school in Tanzania when the first cases of COVID got to the headlines. It was not until weeks later that I even thought of the possibility of the virus reaching Tanzania, much less Moshi, the city where I was residing. However, I was wrong, and my school decided to close when the first case of COVID was reported in the country. Thus, they ordered us to return to our countries.

From this moment, I can justify why I believe that the pandemic did not affect us all equally. While most of my European friends quickly returned to their countries safely, I had to stay in Tanzania, in the uncertainty. First, my parents thought it was quite risky for me to travel half the world until I reached my homeland, Mexico. And later, the cases in Mexico increased a lot. It was simply not worth the risk.

In Tanzania, things were no better. Ruled by a corrupt president, the government did not accept the existence of COVID, nor did it implement any type of health precaution. People, blind to ignorance, would stop me in the streets if I was wearing a mask, and they would ask me to take it off since there was "No corona in Tanzania." Not much was done at my school either when it reopened since the government had a lot of surveillance on us, and they didn't want us to spread "false" ideas.

Fortunately, I never got seriously ill during the rest of my time there, nor when I returned to Mexico. But, stepping on my homeland again, I felt the pandemic in a tangible way for the first time. Face masks and antibacterial gel were everywhere. There were many COVID tests and people impatiently waiting for vaccines.

Deaths. Many deaths.

I am aware that I speak from a privileged point of view during most of this essay. I could have suffered much more. However, it hurts my heart to see how the minimal economic differences separated life from death. While my family and I had enough resources to travel to the United States to get vaccinated, some of my other relatives could not do it, and they

paid for it with death.

Therefore, there is only one thing left for me to say. No, not everyone in the world is feeling the same as you. And accepting it is the first step towards a more egalitarian society in the future. To assume that everyone has the same opportunities to take care of themselves, such as wearing a mask or getting vaccinated, is to ignore our privileges.

It is not my intention at all to make you feel guilty. Of course, it is not our fault that inequality exists, but it is our fault to ignore it. I am simply asking you for something small: reflect a little bit. Before assuming something, try to see it from other perspectives. Before looking for hasty solutions and voicing platitudes, look for personalized solutions according to everyone's context and background. And please, before speaking for someone else, stop to think for a moment: Should you be the one to do it?