

# *SCHOOL OF ARTS PRESS*



**SUNWAY UNIVERSITY | MARCH 2020**



## ABOUT US

The School of Arts at Sunway University offers a variety of disciplines, ranging from Advertising and Public Relations to Design, Architecture, Film Production, Theatre and Music.

School of Arts Press (SOAP) is a monthly newsletter in which we provide information on student and staff achievements, past events as well as a notification platform for upcoming events.

## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

In this month's issue, we acknowledge and celebrate the women in our school in conjunction with the International Women's Month. The newsletter also covers many stories of SOA community on how they cope with the MCO in the midst of this COVID-19 global pandemic.

**School of Arts Press** —

**Advisor/Editor:** Rachel Ong (SOA Arts Project Manager)

**Writers:** Sophia Alyssa & Annie (Nguyen Phuc Thao Nguyen)

**Design:** Sophia Alyssa

**Cover Photo:** A photo taken of the cast and crew of Pleiades: The Seven Sisters Ensemble. Sourced by, Amirul Zain.



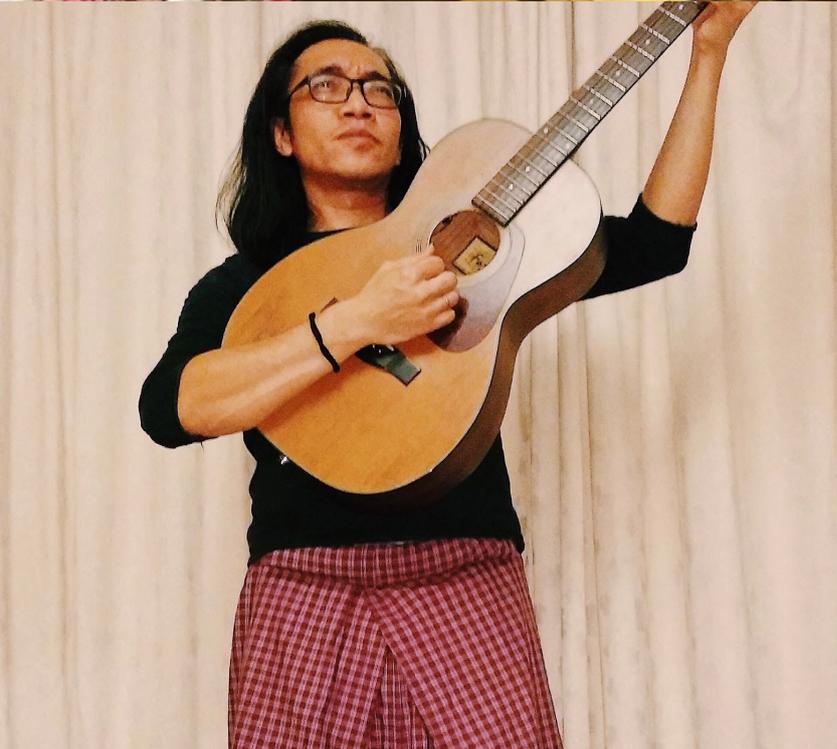
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SOAP

School of Arts Press

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

I write this from my work-at-home office on Day 10 of the Movement Control Order in Malaysia. This is a difficult time for all, in Malaysia and around the world.

The Arts are an important part of how humanity copes with a crisis: we communicate human emotion through creative activities. There is something cathartic about this shared experience that transcends all artificial boundaries, be it political, racial, or otherwise.

Ultimately, we are all human.

During the current pandemic, countless arts organisations around the globe are streaming live performances or allowing free access to online exhibits and archived performances. Here in Malaysia, Astro has allowed free access to movie channels. These are but a few examples of how we use the Arts to reach out and support each other.

Within the School of Arts at Sunway University, we are currently exploring ways to contribute to this global experience, whether online or in-person (after the MCO ends). Some of our lecturers are already involved in delivering virtual performances. We look forward to the day when we can once again share these experiences in person.

Please forward this email to anyone who would be interested in receiving a monthly review of upcoming events and past successes in the SOA. Links to subscribe or unsubscribe are included at the bottom of the newsletter.

— *Professor Donald Bowyer*



From The Left: Delas Santano, Azmyl Yunor, Prof. Matthew Sansom, Dr. Human Esmaili, Wincen Foong & Prof. Donald Bowyer.

# *The Tiffin Carrier Research Sessions.*

The School of Arts held two Tiffin Carrier Research Sessions on 10 February and 3 March respectively this year. These sessions serve as a platform for academic staff to share conference presentations, discussion of on-going research projects, and also as a place to seek collaboration or discuss topics relating to research (such as research methodologies and teaching tools).

It was first organised in August 2019 by the School of Arts academic staff Dr. Catherine Lee, Dr. Andrew Filmer and Ms. Fiona Wong, as part of the research initiatives for Sunway University. Initially, this research session was known as the Brown Bag Research Session. With this being less common here in Malaysia, the committee decided to rename these sessions Tiffin Carrier Research Sessions.

# LOST AND FOUND

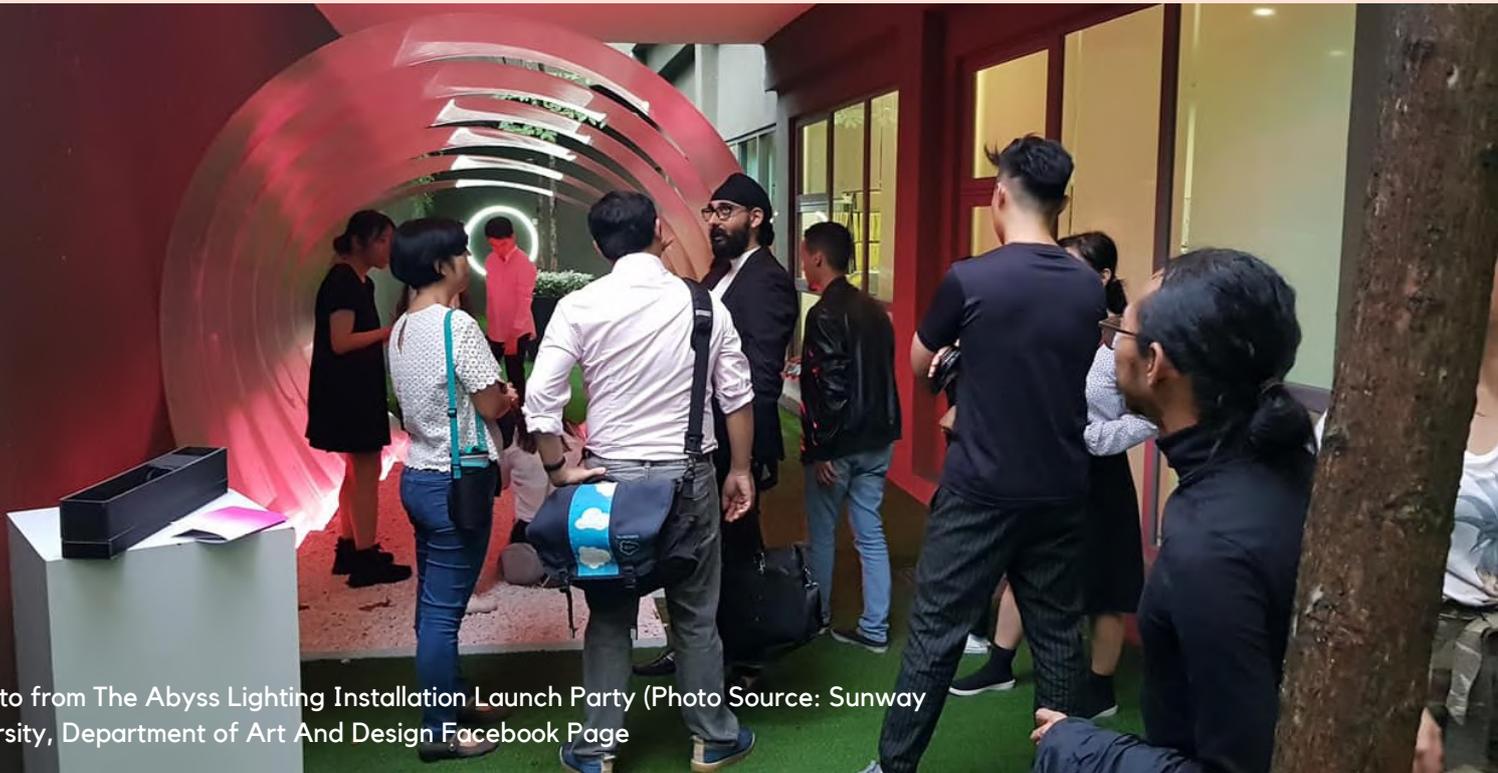




Photo Source: Beatrice Yong

## LOST AND FOUND: Seven Short Plays On Identities

The Diploma in Performing Arts 2019 cohort presented LOST AND FOUND to packed houses in the Rooftop Theatre March 6 - 8. LOST AND FOUND was a culmination of both Theatre Project and Production Management modules, where first-year students conceptualised, wrote, rehearsed, and produced a theatre event for the public. LOST AND FOUND explored the broad theme of identity through seven pieces of different genres and styles. Look out for the cohort's final-year projects at the end of this year.



A photo from The Abyss Lighting Installation Launch Party (Photo Source: Sunway University, Department of Art And Design Facebook Page)

## The Abyss Lighting Installation

By Harraaj Singh a/l Harbans Singh, Third-year Student of BA(Hons) Interior Architecture



Group members: Harraaj Singh, Abudulla, Tan Hua Wei, Er Wei Siang & Manaal Mohammad.

The Abyss Lighting Installation is a group project by BA (Hons) Interior Architecture year 3 students for their lighting design module. The lighting installation is inspired by the concept of the Ganzfeld effect, or also known as perceptual deprivation. The effect is the result of the brain amplifying neural noise in order to look for the missing visual signals. It is a phenomenon of perception caused by exposure to an unstructured, uniform stimulation field.

The lighting installation simulates this effect by creating a lighting structure pathway of blurred lines falling into an abyss. The overall structure is built in a tunnel shape, made from polycarbonate materials and pink LED lights. At the end of the structure, a ring light is placed to give a sense of direction. The launch party happened on 12 March, allowing people to experience the effect created by the students and celebrate their completion of the lighting structure.

*In celebration of International Women's Month,  
SOA Presents*



# *Pleiades: The Seven Sisters Ensemble*

*By Amirul Zain, Third-Year Student of  
BA (Hons) Digital Film Production*



Photo Source: Amirul Zain



Photo Source: Amirul Zain

The Sunway University Rooftop Theatre was dark and silent (as it usually is at the beginning of any performance). In the center, a raised platform is surrounded by 3 music stands, illuminated by little lamps. A tall woman dressed in black steps onto the stage and introduces the Pleiades—seven women whose stories are finally getting told.

PLEIADES had a clear intention: to bring together a group of powerful women, tell the stories of women, all of which are written by women, for women. Initiated by Nor Hazlin Salam, a fellow film lecturer in Sunway University's School Of Arts, this project aims to bring to light the plights of women, while breaking down traditional archetypes usually associated with them. Inspired by the Seven Sisters constellation of the same name, these women come from diverse backgrounds in the arts, with

varying experience amongst them. Carefully brought together by Hazlin, these women have spent the last few months collectively devising their pieces. Devising is a technique commonly used in Malaysian theatre wherein the story comes directly from the cast themselves, with the director sculpting the overall story and content.

Malaysian theatre is known for devising work. However, as with most forms of arts, the female voice is often unused and misunderstood, and is usually written from a stereotypical male gaze. With PLEIADES, Hazlin intends to subvert this trope and portray women in the way women want to be portrayed. Within 2 hours at the Rooftop Theatre, stories of love, childhood, sex, acceptance, and most profoundly, between mothers and daughters, blossomed like roses in a field. Each woman has

been bestowed an Ancient Greek Goddess that corresponds to their respective stories. The stories were first led by Gaia, a woman grieving the death of her beloved cats. One by one, the Goddesses present themselves to the audience: Hera, a woman who sees her mother for who she truly is; Athena, a woman who treasures the memories of her past, as she looks hopefully into the future; Artemis, the creative spirit who feels deeply, albeit her stoic nature; Nemesis, the budding young girl who just had a taste of what life has to offer; Aphrodite, a strong, expressive woman who relishes in being liberated; and Persephone, the girl who is determined enough to break out of the shell that she is in.



*"But today, they will rise together as one, licking their wounds, wiping away their tears, and dancing their way through our hearts and souls. This is a reclamation, a reconciliation. These are the PLEIADES."*

Photo Source: Amirul Zain

Theatre is a house of courage. It always has been. To be able to present oneself as true and as vulnerable as possible, in front of an audience, is nakedness in its true form, despite all these women being fully adorned in white. From being dragged on stage as immobile carcasses to having their tongues cut to dancing and skating, flower plucking and laughing, to the discovery of the body, self, and womanhood, PLEIADES presents a breath of fresh air. Like balls of fire in the eons, they illuminate the stage with their raw intensity, having their voices heard without care of boundaries and proximity

Blurring the lines between safety and discomfort, this piece washes away the sugarcoating of womanhood that modern media tries so hard to project and display femininity unadulteratedly, warts and all. After all, if it isn't in-your-face, is it even theatre? With the cosmos on their side, The Seven Sisters Ensemble is a shower of girl, nay, and women power. May we all wish upon them as they soar above us.



# Happy International Women's Month

CELEBRATING THE WOMEN OF SOA

Photo Source: Amirul Zain

# We Would Like To Acknowledge & Celebrate The Women Of SOA

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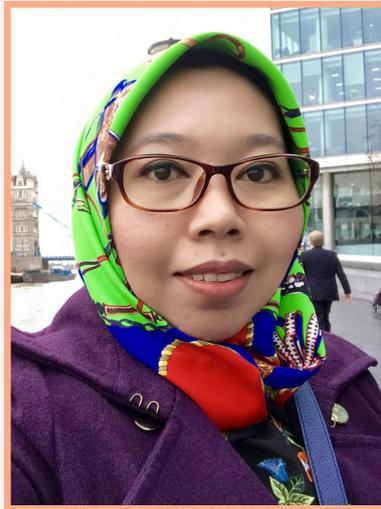
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DOC Lecturer	<b>Yesuselvi Manickam</b>

## Inspiring Quotes by Women of SOA



*"People with great passion can make the impossible happen!"*

**LYDYATY STEPHENIE**



*"A good life is when you assume nothing, do more, smile often, dream big, laugh a lot and realise how blessed you are for what you have".*

**INTAN ABIDA ABU BAKAR**



*"There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish."*

*- Michelle Obama*

**DR CATHERINE LEE CHENG EAN**



*"Of course I am not worried about intimidating men. The type of man who will be intimidated by me is exactly the type of man I have no interest in."*

*- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*

**CHRISTINE YUN-MAY YONG**



*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."*

*- Mahatma Gandhi.*

**PRIYADHARSHINI AHRUMUGAM**



*"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."*

*- Maya Angelou.*

**VIJAYA SOORIA SANGARAN KUTT**

1 — The sign translates to "Love is love. But not underage marriage. That's different. Please take note." Photo taken at the Women's March 2020 rally



*"The point is not for women simply to take power out of men's hands, since that wouldn't change anything about the world. It's a question precisely of destroying that notion of power."  
- Simone de Beauvoir*

**RACHEL ONG SHU YING**



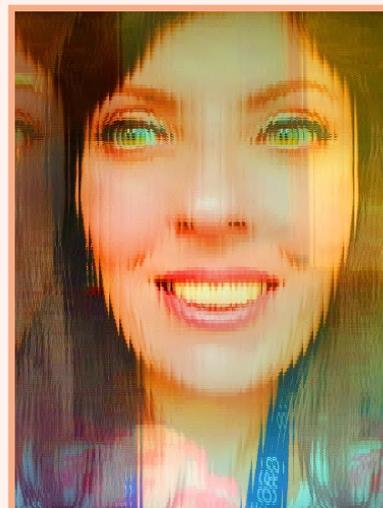
*"Now that your eyes are open, make the sun jealous with your burning passion to start the day. Make the sun jealous or stay in bed."*

**CAROLYN MARIA LEE  
MAY LING**



*"Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. Soul on deck shines like gold in dark times. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires."  
- Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Author of Women who Run with the Wolves*

**NOR HAZLIN NOR SALAM**



*"One of the uncanniest diseases that women face in their lives and from which they must protect themselves is called sexism. It comes and goes, evanescent, always prowling for preys... Like a ghost of androcentrism: omnipresent without ever really being engulfed in the limbo of oblivion."*

**PROF. SABINE-SALIMA  
CHAOUCHE**

# SOA ON LOCKDOWN



# ' FESTIVAL DUDUK RUMAH

*By Azmyl Yunor, Senior Lecturer  
Department of Film and Performing  
Arts*

"When life throws you lemons, you make lemonade", so the saying goes – or whatever beverage from the proverbial fruit life throws at you. This past week, life threw us collectively a huge lemon in the form of COVID-19 pandemic, forcing the government to declare the Movement Control Order (MCO). As a touring and recording independent musician, I had upcoming March gigs cancelled and potentially few more in April at risk of being struck out too. So when the MCO was declared on Monday 16 March, most of my fellow musicians turned to social media to carry on performing, making the proverbial lemonade together on our own, in our living rooms online.

1 – The title translates to " Stay At Home Festival".



On Saturday, 21 March, I finally popped my online gig cherry on Facebook Live called #DudukRumah Session #1, on my personal page ([Azmyl Yunor](#) – add/follow me!). Word got around pretty quick (in spite of my lame social media traction). One day before the gig, a friend contacted me and invited me to perform online on Sunday, 22 March for a fundraising concert for COVID-19 frontliners called Festival Duduk Rumah (#FesDuRu). This concert was joined by other performers, which included one of my favourite comedians - Phoon Chi Ho (an old friend, we go way back). I always say 'Yes!' to any event that supports a meaningful and important cause pro bono. And lo and behold, I had two gigs!

#FesDuRu was a success. They collected more than the set RM10,000 target (check them out on Instagram @[FesDuRu](#) and Facebook [Festival Duduk Rumah](#)). This proved that empathy still translates well digitally and Malaysians are still caring and generous despite reports of panic buying and hoarding on the eve of the MCO. Inspired by the turn of events on the first week of the MCO (the opportunity to perform in my sarong in the comfort of my own home), I held my second #DudukRumah Session from my living room on Saturday, 28 March. I finally got the chance to play my songs exclusively on the family piano we have in our living room (I usually play acoustic guitar and harmonica to accompany my singing). My advice to budding performers out there: turn adversity into your buddy and you shall be rewarded – because you never expected to be rewarded in the first place! Now excuse me while I kiss the sky and help myself to another jug of lemonade... Stay safe everyone & wash your hands!



*"It's simply amazing that he's willing to go out of his way to help students who are doing their internships."*

Thermesh Velusamy,  
World of Buzz

Photo Source: Adrian Lee

## Dr. Adrian's Helping Hand

Dr. Adrian Lee, who newly joined the School of Arts as a lecturer for the Department of Film and Performing Arts, made headlines this March for his kind generosity in reaching out to students amidst this trying time of the COVID-19 crisis.

Dr. Adrian posted a message onto his personal Facebook account, reaching out to financially aid interns from the School of Communication in Universiti Sains Malaysia (where he previously served as a faculty member) for food and basic necessities. His sincere act of care was not only featured on several local news portals, but it has also reached as far as Indonesia.

Read more on this inspiring story [here](#)



## Rooftop Trombone with Prof. Don Bowyer

When the government of Malaysia announced the Movement Control Order (MCO), Prof. Don Bowyer, the Dean of Sunway University's School of Arts, decided to stream live performances every afternoon through Facebook for the duration of the MCO. These performances last for less than ten minutes that includes "live music and bad jokes" as he puts it.

The performances have been a mix of well — known melodies and original compositions by Prof Don, featuring his trombone playing and occasional singing. He believes that "it's important for people to remain connected through this difficult time, and one way to do that is through shared performances."

When the government announced on 25 — March that the MCO would be extended an additional 14 days, Prof Don wrote a new composition for the occasion called the *Isolatin' Blues*. Stay tuned to [SOA's Facebook page](#) to catch his performances

### *Isolatin' Blues*

Oh, I got the Isolatin' Blues  
I am just so tired of the news  
I really need to put on my  
shoes — And go OUT!

Oh, I got the Isolatin' Blues  
I feel I've got nothing to lose  
I need a great big bottle of  
booze — or I'll SHOUT!

# Coming Together As Musicians

By Dr. Andrew, Senior Lecturer  
Department of Film and Performing Arts

In this time when we are all confined to our homes, musicians are coming together, using technology to connect to other artists, and sharing music with the world.

[This article](#) (click to read more!) in The Star reports on how musicians from three continents collaborate to play a work of Bach in a video titled *Through Music We Are Connected*. Included in this were Sunway University School of Arts staff Mabel Wong (violin) and Dr. Andrew Filmer (viola), and was led by Dr. David Chin, who joins the adjunct teaching staff this semester. Dr. Chin had set the idea to have a global collaboration and sent a video of himself conducting an oratorio by Johann Sebastian Bach to Bachfest Malaysia members and a few friends that they've previously collaborated with for them to participate.

Currently, *Through Music We Are Connected* have received more than 100,000 views on their official Youtube channel.

Additionally, School of Arts staff Samuel Tan (piano) and Andrew Filmer (viola) and student Kirthana Kuhendran (voice) collaborated to produce a performance of the patriotic song *Tanah Pusaka*, dedicated to the healthcare front liners. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown that the country is undergoing, Dr. Andrew had started a series of videos with commentary named Home Alone Music, which features selected pieces of music on his personal Youtube channel. The video can be viewed [here](#) or on the School of Arts Facebook page.



Screenshots of Dr. Andrew & Mabel Wong in the "Through Music We Are Connected" video; Screenshot of Kirthana Kuhendran in one of Dr. Andrew's Home Alone Music video series

# Interning On A Lockdown

Amanda Tan Wei Jing is a Year 3 Communication student who has recently served her internship at Influx Asia under WORLDOFBUZZ (WOB). Throughout the duration of her internship, Amanda ran most of WOB's social media pages like Instagram and Facebook. She shared that working at WOB gave her an unforgettable experience and differs greatly from university. Everything was either "you do it or you don't" and because she works at a media/news company, everything has to be done fast and it must be done accurately.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Amanda's internship was affected by the Movement Control Order (MCO) that was announced a few weeks ago. She expressed that she was slightly disappointed as it meant that she wouldn't be able to see her

colleagues properly for the last time. She admitted that "It felt as if there wasn't any closure". Despite the fact that the work doesn't require them to be in the office, it was slightly difficult for her in terms of communication.

The transition to working at home wasn't too hard for her, as the company had always provided the flexibility to do so. It was more so the focus that she needed to do her work as being at home meant that there are going to be distractions. She mentioned that being in a media/news company helped a lot with such a transition as it didn't require any of her colleagues to be physically there. However, the only setback was the delays within their communication when there was a need for crucial information.



Photo Source: Amanda Tan

***"There's only so much our frontliners can do for us, so we need to cooperate and unite."***

Through this trying time, it taught her how to be more self-disciplined and how to efficiently manage her time. She learned that one should never take their "free to roam about every day" for granted. She wishes everyone to "just stay at home if you want your life to go back to normal". She added that our front liners can only do so much in this moment of uncertainty, and it's our responsibility to unite and cooperate.

She believes that with the MCO in place, it's a good chance for everyone to reset and find themselves again. She hopes that no one feels trapped during this time, as "you can always reignite a passion or hobby that you had no time for!".

# COVID-19 Pandemic Situation In Vietnam

By Annie (Nguyen Phuc Thao Nguyen),  
Third-year Student of BA (Hons)  
Communication



Photo Source: Annie

I am Annie and I come from Vietnam. Currently, I am a third-year student of BA (Hons) in Communication. I also work as a student representative for the School of Arts Press. As you all know, the world is in a battle with the novel coronavirus COVID-19 which has caused illness in thousands of people, and more severely, deaths. I would like to share with you how my country is fighting this global pandemic, what I am doing during the self-isolation, and my personal thoughts.

According to the latest update on 31 March, Vietnam has a total of 204 confirmed positive cases. Amongst this figure, 55 people have recovered, was

discharged from the hospital and thankfully, zero fatalities. Learning from other countries with high numbers of infected cases, our government is striving everyday to avert the spread of the virus among the community. They emphasize preventive measures to be taken such as encouraging them to frequently wash hands and use hand sanitizer, avoid gathering in congregational settings, and enforcing the citizens to wear masks when going outside. Social distancing likewise, has been implemented. We are advised to self-isolate at home.



Photo of Vietnamese Vice Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam in the council meeting about the COVID-19 pandemic protection (Credit: kenh14.vn)

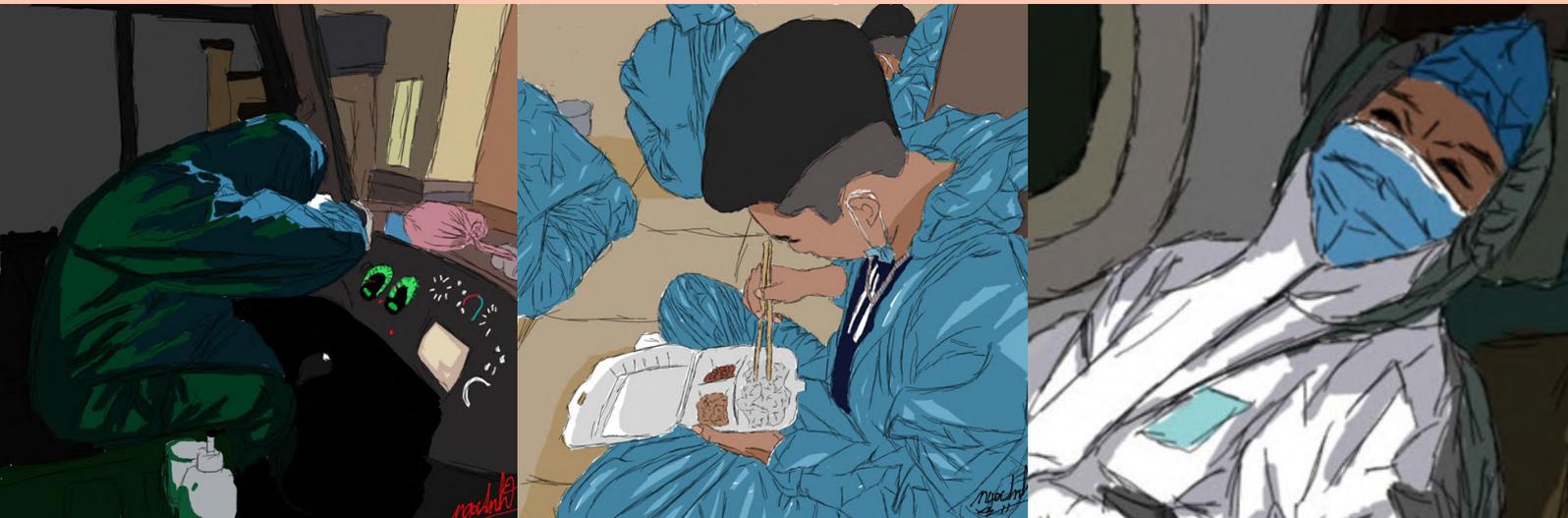
More than that, all schools across the nation have delayed the start of the new semester since February this year. A lot of Vietnamese who are living, studying, and working abroad have returned to their motherland from around the world with the assurance that they will be given utmost care for their health and safety by the authorities. All services except supermarkets, convenience stores, hospitals, and gas stations are shut down for the sake of curbing the spread of the COVID-19. The authority also enforced the border closure to prevent people from entering our country. All mass gatherings are prohibited as well.

I was very relieved that I was able to go back to my country before the abrupt virus outbreak in Malaysia. I was truly shocked when reading the news and also worried about the welfare of my friends in Malaysia. I am thankful to be able to return to my hometown and stay near to my family during such a dangerous circumstance.

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have taken over every news, social media and television station, and no one can deny and ignore the traumatic consequences it has caused to not only my country but the whole world. Fake news likewise triggers anxiety, also causes panic to the community.

However, let's temporarily push aside the visible negativity of the event, and instead, look at the bright side of it.

There are still beautiful stories emerging among the stressful and heart-breaking news aired every day on the media. I am truly touched to see the photos of the doctors, nurses, staff, police officers, soldiers and volunteers who are working laboriously day and night to safeguard thousands of people in the quarantine zone, although it means compromising their sleep, meals, safety, and even their lives.



Paintings in "The unsung heroes" album by Ms. Ngoc Anh (21 years old) about beautiful images of medical teams, soldiers, police officers, volunteers, and other staff when working laboriously day and night to take care of the quarantined patients. (Credit: thanhnien.vn)



The staff were sleeping outside the quarantine area after exhausting work shift (Credit: Vu Phuong Thanh - Thanh Nien online newspaper)

Furthermore, photos of staff eating their meals in a hurry and taking a short nap before venturing in the frightful combat doubtlessly ignited compassion in many. Some quarantined people even "blamed" the staff for feeding them so well (3 adequately nutritious meals per day) which made them gain several kilograms after only a couple of weeks. I can say that this catastrophe has truly reinforced my belief in the humanitarian efforts in our modern and busy society.



"Ghen Co Vy" song was praised internationally and was mentioned in an American news program - HBO as a catchy song and cute choreography to cheer people up in the pandemic. (Credit: program screenshot)

Music has been used for centuries as a tool to boost up the spirit and optimism of people during adversaries such as war, and this war between humans and pandemic is no exception. If you google "Ghen Co Vy", you will find a worldwide viral song created by Vietnamese artists to inform people how to protect themselves against the COVID-19 virus. Without fully understanding the lyrics, I bet you would love it, and even move your body according to its choreography or sing along to its catchy melody.



Ms. Duong came to inform her tenants that she will allow 2 free rental for them due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Credit: kenh14.vn)

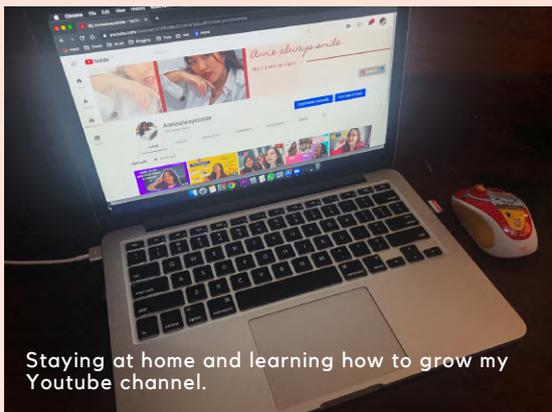


Chau Bui - a Vietnamese fashionista influencer shared on her Instagram story that a nurse gave her flowers, in celebration of International Women's day. (Credit: Instagram: chaubui\_)

There are a lot more meaningful stories shared widely that have brightened the intense weeks/months of this global crisis. Landlords have reached out to their tenants by giving them 2 months worth of free rental to their homes. A local Vietnamese fashion influencer, Chau Bui, also shared her experiences while in quarantine, breaking the negative stigma surrounding the notion of hospital isolation due to COVID-19.

Some took the liberty of their two-week quarantine period as a chance to be technology-free, enabling themselves to put the phone down and becoming more present by delving into hobbies, fitness activities and simply taking the time to breathe in some fresh air at the hospital yard. Being in a collective area made up of a heterogeneous population, the people of Vietnam took this opportunity to bond with each other and create a sense of togetherness regardless of each other's background.

Talking about my personal experience, staying home is not a big problem for me because I am a homebody. In this technological era, eating or shopping is no longer a big issue as you could do everything online. Admittedly, it has been boring sometimes, but I decided to create a to-do list for myself so I could better manage my time during the self-quarantine period. The first thing on my list is to grow my Youtube channel. This takes up most of my time as I learned up SEO writing skills, video editing skills, and to also think of more appealing, creative and helpful content for my videos.



Staying at home and learning how to grow my Youtube channel.

Besides that, Netflix is my close buddy during this holiday. I finished a recent well-known Spanish movie titled "Platform" and three seasons of "Money Heist", which I personally feel has a fantastic script with talented casts. Additionally, looking at the positive angle, I suppose this crisis is a wonderful chance to relax and detox myself before I get busy when the new semester starts. Let's treasure these precious moments and generate self-value.

I am proud to state that our Vietnamese people respect the effort and trust completely the capability of our government, and the medical team in preventing and combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our solidarity and the harmonious cooperation with the authorities is the greatest strength to knock down the virus ultimately. In my point of view, this pandemic has brought us priceless lessons about health, humanitarian, society and most importantly the environment. I hope that soon the COVID-19 pandemic will end and people will rapidly recover from the consequences it has caused.

*“Vietnamese will beat COVID-19 pandemic like the way we beat the invading enemies during the Vietnam War”*

**VIETNAMESE VICE PRIME MINISTER,  
VU DUC DAM.**



Wearing a face mask whenever I need to go outside.