

Ode to Quarantine  
The pros and cons of being in quarantine- An artist statement  
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On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, I boarded a flight from Gothenburg, heading for Johannesburg, South Africa. It was a trip I desperately needed in order to recharge my batteries, after the production of my thesis project "*Toxic*", and the loss of niece. I was burned out mentally and emotionally. So, I planned for a 10-day mini getaway to help me reconnect and heal.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, president Cyril Ramaphosa declared a country lock down in South Africa, the same day I was supposed to head back to Sweden. I was now stranded. I urgently needed to find a safe and secure place to stay while I waited out this awful ordeal. Each time a new flight date was assigned, I got my hopes up and every time I was disappointed and forced to relocate. It's been 42 days (and still counting), and in those days, I've had to relocate four times and still uncertain how many times more I'll have to put up with this.

Being in in Johannesburg during this lockdown definitely has its pros and cons

CONS

As a person with mental health issues, not only did this quarantine force me to face myself and fears, it made me question my life choices and existence. The constant stress triggered severe panic and anxiety attacks that lasted for days and being in an unfamiliar territory without my coping mechanisms, I felt trapped, caged in, like a bird deprived of its essential needs. Freedom.

PROS

Lucky enough I happened to be stranded in a country that has surplus of sunshine and that has been really helpful in a time like this. It forced me to open myself. This whole situation has helped rediscover my lost passion for photography. It has inspired me to be braver and stronger, to ask myself the question I had avoided answering for years; why was I studying film? what did I want to archive?

After years of turbulence circumstances in my life, I had lost sight of my passion and drive. I had forgotten why I started studying film in the first place. The thought of knowing that I might not be one of the lucky filmmakers who succeed frightened me to my core, and that was when it hit me. Being in this quarantine suddenly made me realize why I chose a filmmaker's path, instead of some other instant money-making career path. And yes, I might not make it big in the movie industry and being a person of color my chances we already cut in half. But none of that mattered, because now I finally knew who I'm doing it for.

So, I wrote this poem, to commemorate my new found drive and to answer the questions I kept asking myself. Why do I make films?

I make films to innovate, to challenge the stereotypes, to bring awareness to the topics that lack representation, to challenge your preconceived notions on sexuality, gender roles, racism, and feminism. Films that will motivate and educate. Films that lifts your spirit up when you're feeling a little blue and need cheering up. Films that wouldn't leave you feeling dissatisfied, under-represented, questioning your space or identity. Rather, I make films that reassures that you are seen and that you matter, films that will drag you into a world full of suspense, into a fictional and documentary world, a world that can be seen in both color and monochrome. I

want to make films that reminds you of the good times, but leaves you reaching for the box of tissues. I want to make films that that inspires you, because let's face it, you are whom I aim to please. For you, I will work tirelessly, come hell or high water or even under insanely unfair wages. I will do all of it and more with a smile on my face, because at the end of the day, I'll know it was all worth it, to have made this film for you. You my dear audience, are my motivation and inspiration. You inspire me to do better. To be better.

The end