



Andrew the B4H 'MILLENNIAL IN LOCKDOWN'

Andrew Kulianasi, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, April 24, 2020

To be pretty honest, I feel like I'm always in a state of emergency. If you're with me, you're probably a millennial or you're a person with an actual life. The current state of emergency has me in mixed emotions. To give you a brief run down, I come from a family of two socio-economic extremes. My father's family is the upper middle class and my mother's is relatively poor. Throughout the course of the lockdown I've been able to see both sides and it has really shaped what my views are and if I'm being honest. I'm very conflicted.

Let's start with the simple things shall we. Firstly, I HAVE NOT LEFT EITHER HOUSEHOLD IN AGES AND IT'S KILLING ME! Also, BOTH MY FAMILIES FIND MY ARTSY GAY SELF INTOLERABLE! (Some more unkind than others.) But that's family and you deal with it the best way you know how. Find your space and get on.

Secondly, there's a certain weird interpretation of information that happens whenever there is news about new updates of COVID-19. My mother's family for our lack of power, like we have no electricity, only ever get information from social media, whenever we have the money or the reception to go online, and if our phones have charged enough at our neighbors place. In which I'd say we get a steady feed of information about the SoE.

My information from social media or online news sites has proven accurate. We have been cautious but not discriminatory of people showing even the slightest cough and even though the water in our tank has been pretty low, we are washing our hands regularly.

Whilst my father's family is reliant on television, the numerous smart devices in the house and the newspapers. Although they interestingly enough in my father's family we tend to question almost everything we read and the openly discuss the exceeding amount of information that comes in. The popular theories in that household is that, 5G is causing the Corona, PNG already had an outbreak and it just went undetected and that if you eat loads of garlic it may help your chances.

Conversations about Other health issues, like TB, the common cold & flu, malaria - which I'm in recovery from, have pretty much all gone out the window. I swear when I got down with Malaria, no one wanted to go near me for fear it was COVID 19. (Major eye roll!) Shows you how much the world's eyes have opened to something so deadly! oh wait...HIV, TB, MALARIA...hmm... anyway...

Also, and I blame my grandfather for this, there is almost more focus on the issue on a global scale. Rather than tuning into the local news stations our television is mostly always on CNN or BBC. “FAKE NEWS” as my grandfather calls it. Side note: He’s openly said if he were American, he’d be a republican and support Trump. He’s a real conservative and it’s some Evangelical belief he has that Trump is the modern-day parody of King Jehu who overthrew Jazabel in the bible. (Long story save your judgment please).

Next, I am super-duper surprised at how the citizens of Port Moresby and the country as a whole, didn’t totally go into chaos mode like it did in other places. There were lots of precautions put in place, no raiding or looting of stores, no selfish shelf emptying and no fights over toilet paper. In fact, having been to the shop when everyone was stocking up, I even saw families buying meals for people less fortunate during the lockdown.

There are alarming stories of families going hungry. With my mother, it is normal for us on most days to not have breakfast or lunch and eat just dinner. Hunger is normal. We get by through the money we make through roadside marketing products like noodles, coke etc..., my grandmother’s job as a maid which she still goes to during the SoE (thank you Theodist) and whatever odd jobs my mother and I pick up. In fact, most people I know which include my



father's family are still going to work from the jobs ranging from radio announcer to Marketing officer.

In some ways, business hasn't stopped, yet I guess for both my families we're just lucky. I know my jobs, in entertainment, certainly have stopped and if I were living on my own it would be a whole different story.

I do however have certain angry feeling towards how betelnut sellers have been treated during the SOE. I'm sorry for all the people shaking their heads, but, as a proud Papua New Guinean AND a non-chewer, I am appalled that my countrymen who sell betelnut have no other ways to make do! I am angry at how they have been treated by our own authorities! If I didn't mention one of the things we sell at our small market is betelnut but since we cannot do that there is significant losses. It's a real chance for our government to look at the marketplaces and the little people that earn a living on cash crops and see how they can help!

Wow! Schools and University start on Monday! No, I have not done my assignments! Stop judging! I am very wary. Who is to say that three more cases won't pop up in the city and we'll have to close again? God knows!

Most universities and schools don't have the capacity to conduct school online or over the radio or television. My sisters, grade 6 and 10, who live with my father and go to international schools, have no problem with doing online studies. Whereas my cousins, grade 5 and 7 here with my mother well, if I'm being honest, we're enjoying not being at school. Even though my mother forces me to tutor them every day. So, although going to school on Monday may put my general health at risk, it also may just be a normal day I'm kind of looking forward to after being stuck in the house.

Call my assessment of the SoE a little bland, a little uninformed and maybe a little weird - this is just what I've experienced. Everyone is taking precautions, but it is still hard on people. In all honesty, it isn't as bad here as in other countries and I thank all the Gods there are for that.

Will it get worse? Judging on how our government has conducted themselves in enforcing boarder control stopping flights and restricting movement, I'm hopeful. I think it's in our nature as Papua New Guineans to just carry on. Most of us need to, to survive. There is this newfound sense of being aware of the dangers of sickness that have really honestly improved the hygiene and the health habits of the population as a whole.



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So, very much more aware, in some cases too aware, but very much looking to our families, our behaviour and asking....how do we make the most of this, and how do we help get better?

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