

The Matthew (2020 Apr)

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the matthew

JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY
APRIL 2020

Quarantine Edition:



thanks to Zoom Video Conferencing

Featuring The Matthew Team

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Dear JCU Community,

I did not think my last letter as Editor would be written in circumstances like this. Just a few months ago, I expected my last semester at John Cabot University to go quite differently. I expected excitement, celebration, emotional goodbyes but peaceful endings, just before smooth transitions to whatever was going to come next after this chapter. Instead, myself, the JCU community, and the entire world is experiencing just the opposite -- abrupt endings making our experiences feel unfinished, a state of limbo instead of transition, and goodbyes left unsaid.

It is hard leaving JCU in this way. I came to Italy four years ago never expecting time to pass so swiftly, and finish with an ending so unsatisfying. However, looking back on the experiences I have had as the editor in chief of The Matthew, I am honored for this issue to be my last. This issue, I believe, represents the strength of our community, as it comes together on the Newspaper to discuss emotions, news, and prospects of the future. It is an issue of solidarity, friendship, and awareness. Based on the submissions we received for this special digital edition, I can confidently say that the students, faculty, and staff at JCU have cultivated an informed, encouraging place that I am, and will always be, proud to be a part of.

My role in The Matthew began with the Giuseppe Conte coverage (awkward!) and ended with a global pandemic. It has been quite a wild ride. Throughout the entire time, my team and our advisor, my peers, my professors, and the Student Life staff have supported and worked with me to produce a newspaper that I hope best represents the ideals of our international family. It has been a pleasure working for the incredible people that make The Matthew something great.

So with that, I say: thank you. Thank you for reading, for participating, for writing. This community has been one of the most beautiful things I have gotten to write about.

Ad maiora,

Adriana DeNoble
Editor in Chief



Note: With the ever changing status of COVID-19 and its constant updates, we have included articles that were submitted with information that is consistent with the date it was written, but that may be outdated at the time of publication. Old news and updated facts will be flagged with a disclaimer at the top of the article.

We are pleased to inform our readers:

The Matthew is an independent student-run and submission-based monthly publication that seeks to be a platform for all student voices of the JCU community. Following journalistic and ethical standards while abiding by the university's mission and code of conduct, The Matthew is committed to serving as an open forum for thoughtful, diverse, and informed discussion, and to provide news and information relevant to our university. The Matthew is editorially independent of JCU and its administrators, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or of John Cabot University.

On Digital Schooling

By Professor Nefeli Misuraca

“... a few lines I’ve written discussing the perspective a professor has gained into students’ lives after a month of digital life:”

After just a month of this totally digital life, I think I understand my students a little better. My digital natives rely every day on the very forms of communication I am just getting familiar with. And I realized that:

1. The complete absence of non-verbal communication makes you much, much more susceptible and sensitive, eliciting feelings of exclusion and disenfranchisement;

2. A 24-hour-day is too short for the fast web world: you are constantly bombarded by more or less meaningful things that you feel you have to read/watch/know;

3. You end every day with a shapeless mass of information and images stuck in your brain that had no time to find a proper place to become structured memories.

The result is that every day looks like the one before it, and you haven’t really progressed as a thinker, as a friend, as a person. You just constantly feel you’re missing out.



Photo by Peter K. Levy on Flickr

John Cabot University's Collaboration with TEDxRoma Postponed due to COVID – 19

TED Circles event about love is postponed but compassion and mindfulness are essential during this time.

By Meri Hovsepyan



The TED Circles Flyer, Courtesy of John Cabot University

ROME – JCU's first ever TED Circles event, titled "Love as a Force For Social Justice" organized by the Institute for Entrepreneurship for the university's Social Change Day on Feb. 28 had to be postponed due the spread of COVID 19, otherwise known as the coronavirus.

This TED event is JCU's first partnership with TEDxRoma. Even though the event is in collaboration with TEDxRoma, JCU's Institute for Entrepreneurship is the official organizer for the TED Circles event. TED Circles is a new format that allows people to organize events independently. TEDx is a program created by TED where the X stands for "independently organized TED event."

The TED Circles' official theme for February was How We Love. According to the assistant in the Institute for Entrepreneurship, Costanza Cicero, JCU was inspired by this theme.

"We decided that since the theme was How We Love it could have been an interesting way to discuss social change in a different way," Cicero said. "We think it can lead to a fruitful conversation."

The news about the postponement of the TED Circles event was announced on Thursday, Feb. 27, the day before the event was meant to take

place. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus in Northern Italy, JCU has been active in giving updates to its students, faculty and staff about the situation. The administration continues providing up-to-date information from the Italian Government, as well as communicating medical orders and hygiene procedures that should be followed, such as frequently washing hands, using alcohol-based hand rub, maintaining distance and avoiding touching the face with our hands. JCU is constantly communicating with the students via email. The students receive emails almost every day about the news regarding the virus outbreak.

JCU's Office of Health and Wellbeing has been particularly active on their Instagram page by giving tips,

answering questions and helping students better adapt to the global pandemic, which has forced Italy and many other countries to go on lockdown. The Instagram page constantly engages with the students by giving suggestions on what to do during the lockdown. Some suggestions include doing 15-minute workouts at home, drinking lemon water, trying to meditate, keeping a balanced diet and also giving tips about adapting to remote learning. The page gives advice on who the students can reach out if they are feeling stressed along with giving healthy food recipes such as cauliflower soup or tasty strawberry pancakes. Most importantly, the Instagram account offers remote health resources such as Zoom counseling, emotional support, athletics resources, or even spiritual guidance.

As of now, the new date for the TED Circles event is unknown.

This is the second year that JCU has organized a Social Change Day. Last year's event included the screening of an award-winning film "Soufra," (2017) a documentary by Thomas A. Morgan, which tells the story of a fearless social entrepreneur.

The TED Circles in February was meant to be an event open to both the entire JCU community but also to the public. The JCU Institute for Entrepreneurship started announcing the panelists on their social me-

Continued...

dia platforms on Feb. 13, with small descriptions of each individual's bio. The first panelist announced was Chris Richmond NZI, founder of MyGrants, an educational app that helps refugees and asylum seekers in Italy. The second speaker announced was Gina Siddu Pilia, Professor of Leadership and Mindfulness at JCU. On Feb. 19, the Institute announced the third speaker, Andrea Iacomini, spokesperson for UNICEF Italy. Shaza Saker, the founder of Hummustown, and JCU alumni was the fourth speaker announced. On Feb. 24, the Institute announced the fifth and final panelist, Antonio Pelosi, founder of Albergo Etico, a hotel where the staff consists of people with disabilities who are given the opportunity to live and work independently in the business while building their identity.

After the announcement of the TED Circles' postponement by the Institute there hasn't been a fixed update on the rescheduling of the event. According to the Facebook event created by the university for JCU's TED Circles, the event is tentatively scheduled to take place on June 15, however, the Institute has yet to address and confirm the given date.

According to one of the announced speakers, professor Pilia, the current situation of the COVID-19 is the time for humanity to reflect and take care of each other by practicing mindfulness and compassion.

"Without compassion we cannot do anything," Pilia said. "Compassion testifies that we are human. We are here. The only meaning in life and of life that we have is compassion, helping each other and this is a very good moment for us."

Professor Pilia's speech for the TED Circles event was going to be along the same lines of compassion since she could not ignore the given situation of the virus outbreak in Italy and in the world. Eating and sleeping well will increase our immune system along with experiencing positive emotions, which bring love and compassion. With the current virus outbreak, professor Pilia suggests practicing mindfulness, which reduces stress.

"There is empirical evidence that promotes the increase of the immune system via the activation of the parasympathetic system," Pilia said.

According to Cleveland Clinic, by meditating and doing yoga even for a day can train the immune system and have a calming effect on the body. Over time, meditation can successfully benefit and boost the immune system. There are online-guided meditation programs such as Head Space, that can help start daily practice of mindfulness.

Julia Del Papa, Director of Community Service, Religious Life and Multiculturalism, was to set the tone for the event during the introduction if the event were to take place in February, and she would have talked about the volunteering opportunities that the community service program provides for the students. According to Del Papa, JCU has been invited to TEDx Talks in the past. There have been previous collaborations where the university was asked to speak. Christian Tracci and Viktor Sobra Delseny were the two JCU students invited to speak at the TedxYouth@Trastevere event in 2015 with the theme Made in the Future.

TED Circles' panel discussion was to be moderated by Deanna Lee, a journalist, media expert and recipient of eight Emmy Awards for reporting. Besides being the moderator for the event, Lee also wanted to focus

on the two main concepts of "love" and "circles" during the event. For each panelist, Lee had asked them to put the concept of love in their field of profession, to show how it had helped them, instead of thinking about love in a tender and soft way.

"We're here today not around a sissy word but a word that is going to change things," Lee said in an interview.

According to Lee, if the event takes place in the future, the current situation will certainly be discussed along the lines of love and even social justice. Both professor Pilia and Lee agree that there is no way the situation can be ignored and not talked about in the future.

TED Circles is not the only big event that was postponed or cancelled at JCU before the nationwide lockdown in Italy on March 9. According to the university's public calendar, an event organized by the Department of English Language and Literature, titled "Azucena Keatley on English First World War Poetry and the 'Poet's Poet:' Wilfred Owen," scheduled to take place on March 30, was cancelled. The 2020 International Journalism Festival in Perugia, Umbria, to be held from April 1 to April 5, was cancelled. A number of students had planned to attend.

JCU's TED Circles is not the only TED based event that had to be postponed or cancelled. TEDxYouth@Zurich has also been cancelled. According to BBC News, the annual TED conference that had to take place in Vancouver is postponed until July or it might be held virtually.

Currently there is no official information about the TED Circles being rescheduled, as the university remains closed and the people of Italy stay at home for an extended quarantine until early May.

The TED Circles website published the themes for the upcoming spring months: A Changing World and Life At Its Fullest, since the themes for the circles change every month.

The JCU Institute for Entrepreneurship remains the main organizer for the university's Social Change Day as it aims to make it a yearly event.

"I think it's really interesting, notable and commendable that the TED Circle is coming out of the Institute for Entrepreneurship," Lee said. "Entrepreneurship certainly can encompass literally any circles of ideas towards progress and society moving forward and that is entrepreneurship and that is love for social change."

Minor in Art and Design Now Available at JCU

By Em Cegielski

ROME – Students have been asking, and the Administration responded this semester; on March 19, Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs Mary Merva announced that JCU will be offering the minor in Art and Design to begin in Fall 2020.

Dean Merva said there was a delay in the activation of the minor due to the government closure of universities in Italy on March 9 in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Nonetheless, students can now look forward to pursuing a minor in Art and Design this upcoming fall.

“I would like to take this time to thank the students and faculty who contributed to the inspiration and realization of this Minor in Art and Design,” said Dean Merva in the email announcement.

The JCU website states: “The Minor in Art and Design develops visual thinking and aesthetic awareness; as well as abilities for innovative decision-making, problem-solving, and project management.”

This minor in Art and Design, which now adds to a list of 18 minors and 14 majors at JCU, is a six course minor. The requirements include at least five Studio Art courses (prefix AS), one Drawing course, and a maximum of one Art History course (prefix AH).

A minor becomes official at JCU after two processes are completed: approval and activation. First, as an American university, JCU has to adhere to the United States Department of Education regulations. Once this department approves a minor, it becomes an eligible option for JCU.

The other process is activating the minor. The request of activating a minor can come from any active member of the JCU community. According to Dean Merva, suggestions for a minor to be activated can come from a student, admissions, departments, or individual faculty members. The minor is then collectively reviewed by the President of JCU and the Board of Trustees.

The question asked is if the minor builds the mission of the university— not takes away from it, said Merva.

“We have to develop the majors we have. It’s about how you educate young people within the curriculum which allows them to taste and explore different opportunities,” said Merva. James Gardner, Assistant Professor of Studio Arts, said that the minor had been approved by JCU before he started working at JCU in Fall 2019.

“Studio Art is a porous set of subjects, which thrive in an interdisciplinary approach,” said Gardner. “Artists and Designers have always responded to social, cultural and economical factors of their times, drawing upon a diverse range of influences to generate innovative work. A liberal arts education, which allows students to engage with a wide range of fields, including studio art, is empathetic to this.”

The Process of Activating the Minor in Art and Design

In retrospect, students, professors, and Administration were all involved in the process for the minor in Art and Design to be activated.

Gabrielle Ciulli, a senior in Communications, is one of the students who has advocated for the activation of the Art and Design minor.

“The studio art facilities are there, the classes are there, the professors are there, all the organization needed for a minor is there,” Ciulli said.

The name of the minor was originally a minor in Studio Art but has been changed to a minor in Art and Design. Studio Art is a discipline under the Art History Department. Studio Art includes hands-on art classes like drawing, fresco painting, and photography. Many students across departments have taken these studio art classes but there was no active minor at the time. Students said their frustration was that they had enough classes to complete a minor, but they would not receive recognition of completion of the minor on their transcripts.



Photo by Em Cegielski. A collection of student canvases.

these open house nights is where he and other students first started to ask for the minor in Art and Design to be activated. For the past three years, Ciulli has been attending the open houses as well as contacting Administration about the minor, but until last semester

students became more vocal at these meetings about wanting the minor to be activated.

In response to the students request, the Communications Department created a petition for the minor to become activated. Lorenzo Offidani, a third-year Communications student, gathered other fellow students who were also interested in the minor to sign the petition. Both Ciulli and Offidani said there were around 20 or more students who signed the petition, and it was submitted to the Dean’s Office at the end of the Fall semester. Dean Merva responded to this request by starting to gather the paperwork at the beginning of Spring semester and officially announced the activation of the minor in Art and Design this month. Ciulli said he has completed about seven studio art classes, which is enough to complete the minor. Ciulli is planning on going to art school once he graduates. However, since Ciulli is graduating this semester, he won’t obtain the minor in Art and Design on his transcript because the minor is not being offered until Fall 2020. Despite not graduating with the minor, Ciulli said that the knowledge he gained from the studio art classes could not be taken away from him.

Similar to Ciulli’s thought, Offidani said, “Having it [a studio art minor] would be nice but,



Photo by Em Cegielski. Renovations are being made to JCU’s expanding art studio with compliments to the new minor.

as an artist, having a degree is irrelevant because in the end your portfolio and creativity are the things that are important.” Unlike Ciulli, Offidani will have access to the minor in the upcoming semester.

Antonio Lopez, Professor and Chair of Communications Department, has been in support of the minor in Art and Design. Lopez said that offering a minor in Art and Design could make or break an incoming student’s decision about attending JCU if art was one of their interests. According to Lopez, the minor could attract interested students but would lose them if it doesn’t become an option.

Kwame Phillips, Assistant Professor of Communications, has also expressed support of the minor in Art and Design. Phillips said that having a minor allows for students to have a focus and concentration while “showcasing who they are.” According to Phillips, having minors that students are interested in inherently benefits the university as a whole, because it entails having engaging conversations inside of the classroom that benefit both students and faculty, which then makes the university a place for unique scholarship.

Top universities in the USA like Stanford, Yale, University of Notre Dame, and Columbia all offer majors or minors in applied arts. JCU has joined this band wagon of offering a minor in Art and Design that has both traditional and contemporary art forms, like graphic design.

According to the New York Federal Reserve Bank, recent graduates and young workers in the USA, from ages 22 to 27, had the highest unemployment and underemployment rates out of all other workers. Those students majoring in Fine Arts were at a 5.6 percent unemployment and at a 58.4 percent underemployment.

On the other hand, reports from The New York Times, Time, and Investopedia, claim that having a minor can increase a student’s hiring chances by showing diversity in studies and a unique concentration. According to these sources, if the minor is well chosen for the direction the student is heading in, the minor can be an asset for the student’s future.

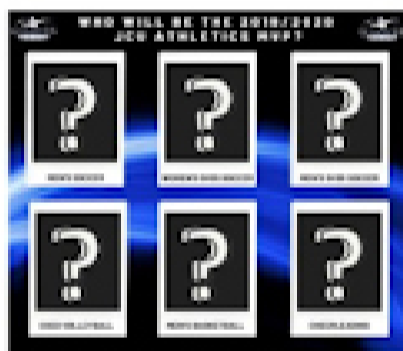
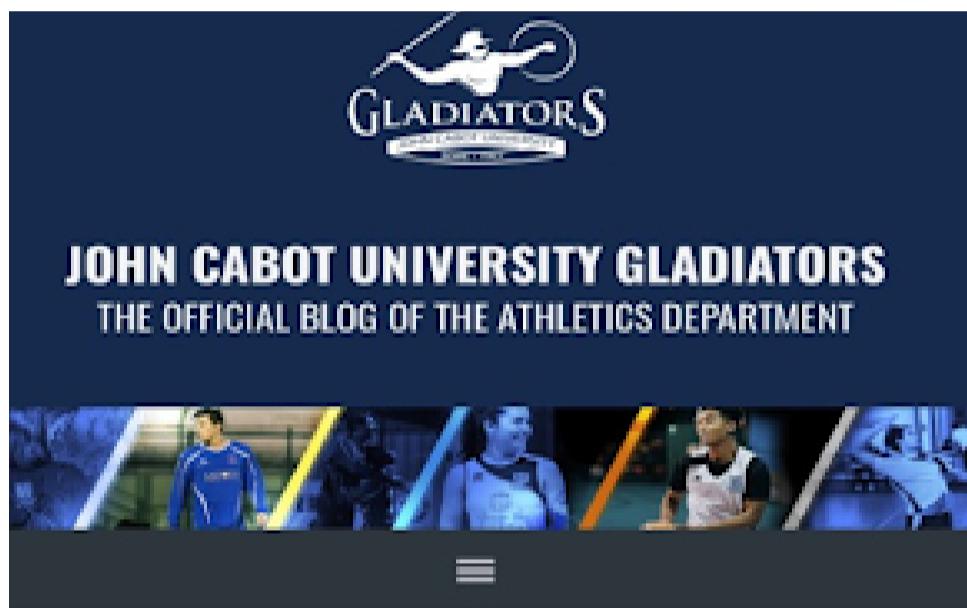
“Imagine a world without TV, film, music, books, and design. What kind of world would that be?” said Lopez. “So, without art, we would have none of that. In fact, I would say art is the most important thing we have in our culture.”

For more information about the minor in Art and Design go to www.johncabot.edu/academics/art-design-minor.aspx or contact Professor Gardner for more information at jgardner@johncabot.edu.

No Greece this year. COVID-19 causes cancellation of JCU Gladiators trip to Greece

Due to the Coronavirus outbreak in Italy and the closing of borders, The Athletics Department of John Cabot University cancelled its annual trip to a sports festival in Athens

By Kseniia Osadcha



April 4, 2020

2020 Players of The Year: vote now!

JCU Athletics has decided to involve our community in a new and special virtual activity.

*Screenshot from JCU Athletics Department blog. April 4, 2020.
Courtesy of gladiators.johncabot.edu*

ROME—Everything was done: forming the team, regular training, preparations for the trip. Except for buying plane tickets to Athens, the Gladiators were ready to compete, when suddenly Italy went on a lockdown due to the massive outbreak of COVID-19 across the country. On Sunday March 8, the Prime minister of Italy, Giuseppe Conte, announced the entire country under “Red Zone,” which was a decision that has put the country on quarantine, prohibiting any type of travelling.

A trip planned in advance to the Sports Festival of the American College of Athens that would have taken place from March 23 to March 29 was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Until now, there is no official statement from the festival regarding if the event would change its format or be cancelled. However, since many of the teams travelling to Athens are international, they would not be able to be present and to participate in it this year.

The Sports Festival of American College of Athens is the annual sports competition between international universities around the world. Soccer, basketball, volleyball, futsal, tennis, table tennis, swimming, water polo, are the sports presented during the festival that the American College of Greece hosts. Each year new teams come to participate.

Women’s Soccer Team Disappointment

The festival was to be a significant experience for teams like the JCU women’s-soccer team, which would have been the only soccer team to represent JCU in the festival. According to Martina Petrucci, a JCU student, and JCU women-soccer team player for 2 semesters, - soccer is historically a game for men, and the women’s-soccer team was very excited about a trip which could’ve been a great opportunity to gain more attention on women’s soccer. “For women [soccer] there is no big audience during the games, so we are almost alone with others from the Athletics Department,” said Petrucci. “People do not seem to care, we are women, playing a men’s game.” The team had hoped that, after the festival, a larger portion of the JCU community would start to consider women’s-soccer a serious game. This goal made the girls train very hard: two times a week for over three months.

Previous to the coronavirus outbreak, Petrucci had said that the team was very emotional about the trip: “We are very excited, a week full of games. Our goal is to win of course.”

However, a couple weeks passed and the situation changed completely. During the first days of March, when the COVID-19 outbreak went out of control, many study abroad students, who were also members of JCU Gladiators decided to go back home and were forced to leave the team.

“I was on the train when I started receiving messages in our team’s WhatsApp group from many students saying that they were leaving the team,” said Petrucci.

By the second week of March, European borders were being closed.

A tradition of winning

The trip to the sports festival in Athens has already become a tradition of JCU Gladiators, as the team of Gladiators has gone there for two years in a row.

JCU teams became a huge success in Athens. In 2018, Women’s Futsal team put their hearts into every single game and gave their best, earning an important 2nd place. The next year, in 2019, the Gladiators also participated successfully.

According to the Athletics director, Marco Iorio, during last year’s festival, the teams learned an important lesson. “People say, sometimes you win, sometimes you learn, and our Gladiators have learned an important lesson during their participation in the ACG International Sports Festival 2019,” said Iorio.

Since each year many study abroad students sign up for Gladiators, this competition is an opportunity for them to travel, bring their own experience, and learn from other players.

The sports festival of 2020 was going to be an important event for the JCU community.

Continued...



Athens airport, Greece. The Gladiators' team arrived at the American College of Greece. April 12, 2019. Courtesy of gladiators.johncabot.edu

JCU Athletics Department amidst the COVID-19 crisis

Even despite the situation with the quarantine, the university being closed, and many students having returned home, the John Cabot University Athletics Department remains very active online. Since the lockdown in Italy started, the Department has been posting daily messages on Instagram and Facebook with tips on fitness routines at home. Students can find 20-minute high-intensity, interval training classes and Kickboxing Classes on Gladiators Instagram account @JCUgladiators. On Saturday March 21 on Gladiators' YouTube channel, students could find trivia games about Women in Sports. Students received many updates from the trainers and director Iorio. The department is actively using the Zoom application as well, which helps students stay in touch with each other.

Students have also followed and supported the Athletics Department during these difficult times, and this connection shows that only together they can overcome difficult times.

"Each and every member of the team is working very hard to achieve the result, but sometimes during the usual games there is not a lot of support from actual fans, the benches are often empty," said Kennedy Dahlia, a JCU student and Gladiators cheerleader.

Now everyone is as one. The spirit of John Cabot University Athletics Department is visible. "JCU Gladiators have a special spirit of teamwork," said JCU student Jacquelline Mane who works at the gym. "We are all very enthusiastic, and that is what I like the most about being a member of JCU Athletics Department."

The JCU community is looking forward to the moment when the quarantine will be over, when students will be able to go to Trastevere Stadium, and enjoy soccer games and other sports.



"Gladiators" courtesy of Jacquelline Mane on Facebook. Jan. 26 2020

Wellbeing Support: John Cabot University responds to COVID-19 emergency with remote psychological support

After the COVID-19 outbreak, John Cabot looks after the students' health and wellbeing through remote activities and online conversations.

By Sabrina Italia



Photo by Max van den Oetelaar on Unsplash

ROME - John Cabot University continues monitoring its community's wellness in remote-mode after the COVID-19 outbreak. The university lends support to the students through online well-being activities, mindfulness and yoga classes, and counseling helpline services.

The impossibility of addressing each student's individual quarantine state, being in Italy or in their home country, does not prevent John Cabot from caring about students' health and well-being in response to the COVID-19 distress.

The JCU official website reports constant updates about the national health situation, the latest government decisions and moves about prevention, and the Minister of Health's advice on preventive personal hygiene. Additionally, the same information is supplied to students by email. The university also provides students with emergency telephone numbers, such as the Lazio regional number, in case someone may experience any suspicious flu symptoms and the JCU emergency number which is active 24/7. Another service John Cabot offers its students during the quarantine period is Mondo Equilibrio, a JCU affiliated counselling and helpline service. For those who are willing to opt for an online therapy session, Mondo Equilibrio supplies its service through a double online counselling modality: the students can either have a 24/7 video chat with the association's affiliated counsellors or a 24/7 Counselling Helpline with qualified specialists.

"We are going through a moment in which the fact of being far from our loved ones and from your own country might make us feel confused and scared," said Josephine Patruno, an Italian JCU student, who learned about the service through the JCU Health Instagram page. "As an Italian degree-seeking student at JCU, I also feel overwhelmed by the situation we are all facing, and I believe Mondo Equilibrio can play an essential subsidiary role in this regard."

Remote Wellbeing Alternatives

Due to the COVID-19, many of the JCU health-related events scheduled for March and April were postponed to a date to be defined, or even cancelled, including Professor Rosa Filardi's therapy workshop, The Dancing

Body. To cover for the lost meetings, Professor Filardi sent the seminar's participants a list of activities they could do, in the meanwhile, to keep working on their body-mind connection just for 10 minutes a day.

- Let go of your weight on the floor or on a chair.
- Concentrate on your breathing and be connected with your whole body-mind.
- Feel your core / center in order to be in connection with yourself and the world around you
- Develop your internal witness observing your thoughts and worries. Don't stay with them, just observe them, and let them go...
- Record some of your sensations / emotions or images that come up.
- You can then (when you wish to do so) write down one or more words, and / or leave a graphic sign on a page about this experience.

The JCU Office of Health and Wellbeing is also offering many online well-being activities with which the students can engage from their homes. Updated well-being activities to deal with home quarantine have replaced the originally scheduled physical meetings:

- JCU Athletics Seminar: March 22 at 4 p.m.
- Dr. Andrea Guerriero live on Instagram: March 28 at 11:30 a.m.
- Free Mindfulness Classes for the Parents and Children of JCU: March 19 at 6 p.m.
- The 28-Day online Mindfulness Challenge
- Instagram post instructions for a 10-minute Yoga Work Out
- Instagram post instructions for a 10-minute Meditation Session
- Instagram post instructions for a 15-minute Home Workout
- Stay fit with Alex: Mon., Wed., and Fri. at 3:30 p.m.

With the aim of offering the university's community various ways to cope with the COVID-19's duress, JCU is also offering a free online meditation course led by a Tibetan Buddhist meditation teacher, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche.

"We shouldn't feel guilty, though, if we feel panic. But we can do something to avoid it, to at least stay with the panic," said JCU Professor Gina Siddu Pilia, coordinator of the Foreign Language Resource Center (FLRC). "We cannot suppress panic. We can still use stress management techniques, so mindfulness, for counterbalance the panic, the fear."

Pilia said that practicing mindfulness allows one to be in the parasympathetic system, where positive emotions, engagement, compassion, self-compassion, and meaning of life can be developed by the self.

However, since the national situation of the coronavirus is still uncertain, further governmental updates may come up and require John Cabot to reschedule its plans accordingly. The JCU internal changes and the latest updates on coronavirus can be found on the news section of JCU's official website.

For the time being, John Cabot University continues to take care of the well-being of the students remotely, providing them with the opportunity to carry out short sessions of art therapy from home, as in the case of The Dancing Body workshop and online workout activities.

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The Outbreak

Panic itself became Italy's moral imperative for prevention. Due to the unexpected rapid outbreak of COVID-19 from Northern Italy to the entire region, a government decree issued by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and signed by Conte himself and Minister of Health Roberto Speranza, declared the shutdown of all schools of all grades and universities along the period between March 4 and April 3.

REMEMBER, THE CONFIDENTIAL
EQUILIBRIO HELPLINE IS AVAILABLE TO
ALL JCU STUDENTS - 24/7 - ANYWHERE
IN THE WORLD

24/7

WHERE ARE YOU CALLING FROM?

US: 011 44 20 7938 0870*
FRANCE: 08 05 11 07 86
ITALY: 800 969 239
SPAIN: 800 099 543
UK: 0808 169 1595
SWITZERLAND: 0800 564622

*CHECK WITH YOUR PROVIDER FOR INTERNATIONAL RATES

Courtesy of @jcuhealth, JCU's Office of Health and Wellbeing Instagram page.

On April 1, a second decree announcing the extension of the security measures until April 13 was issued by Conte and signed by the Prime Minister himself and the Minister of Health.

Nevertheless, when the first decree came into force, John Cabot University was preparing for Spring Break, scheduled from March 9 to March 15. This facilitated the faculty and staff community to create alternative remote learning plans to face the situation of the virus' national outbreak and the consequential lock down of the entire country.

In the meanwhile, according to some students' reports, what was meant to be a long-awaited break to relax and recharge for the rest of the semester turned out to be a major moment of distress, with the entire of Italy being in quarantine.

"I'm going crazy with being stuck in the house," said Emily Saltarelli, a JCU student from the United States. "I don't think anyone imagined how quickly the situation would escalate. No one imagines they will be the victim of bad circumstances, but here the world is finding itself in mass hysteria," said Saltarelli.

"It's so strange how a few weeks ago life seemed so normal and now it's as if we're living in a police state," said Em Cegielski, a JCU student from Hawaii. "Unfortunately, I was by myself in Rome. My roommate had gone back home to Germany, so it was just me in the apartment. It's strange how quiet it was, but I tried to keep myself active and not to think about the situation too much," said Cegielski, who recently decided to return home.

The quarantine experience varies according to JCU students' individual cases, with some students who managed to go back to their families before the lockdown, and some others who remained stranded in Rome by themselves.

A JCU Spanish International Business student, Fernando Royuela, experienced many troubles trying to go back to his home country after the decree. After Royuela found out that his flight for Madrid was cancelled, being left without any update about the available flights to Spain, he was able to return to Spain on a ship full of strangers, who were trying to go back home as well.

"When I was in the line waiting to get on board, there were many guards and policemen with masks, screaming at us and giving contradictory instructions. I thought for a moment that they were not going to let us in," said Royuela. "At one point, I did not care about the coronavirus nor the money I lost due to the flight cancellation. I just wanted to come back home and do the quarantine with my family."

JCU Wellness Office response

In the face of the virus outbreak, factual information is enriched by the testimonies of JCU degree seeking and study abroad students who are dealing with this health emergency and the threat to their well-being. It's due to traumatic events such as the COVID-19 that entire populations can experience long-term psychological impairments.

"Well, the panic. The panic is definitely something we cannot see. Fear is something you experience when you have the problem in front of you," said Professor Siddu Pilia. "Panic is something that you experience when you cannot see the problem, but you know that there is one. We cannot see viruses and that's why we develop panic," said Pilia.

In the realm of its restricted community, John Cabot University has called for the intervention of qualified experts in the field of mindfulness, students counsellors, and from The Office of Health and Well-being, to monitor the students' health and well-being.

The way to get
started is to quit
talking and begin
doing."
- Walt Disney

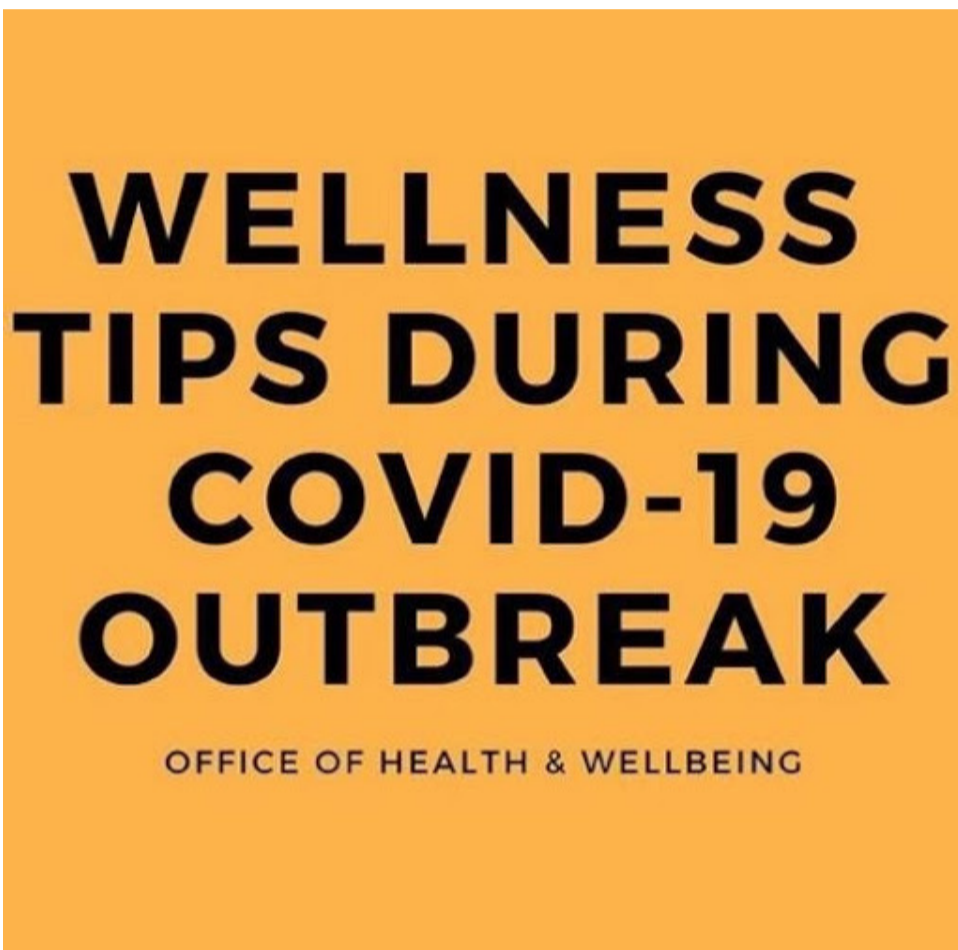
#WEAREOPEN
#BECREATIVE

Courtesy of @jcustudentlife Instagram page.

Continued...

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Courtesy of @jcuhealth, JCU's Office of Health and Wellbeing Instagram page.

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Regular wellness events at JCU

The JCU's official Community Calendar and the JCU Health Instagram page had periodically published a Spring semester schedule of the health and well-being initiatives, the majority of which took place before the suspension of all activities after the Italian government decree of March 9.

- Meditation Afternoon Classes on Mondays from 5:45 p.m. Tues. from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.- Thurs. from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.- Critelli Campus
- Ask the Doctor Coronavirus Edition: Feb. 26, Guarini courtyard
- Free Breast Screening: March 9, Corsini Campus, Doctor's Studio
- Self- Defense Classes: Tues. at 8 p.m. and Friday at 4 p.m. at Gianicolo Residence
- Open Air Yoga Class and Free Lunch: Feb. 28, Secchia Terrace Guarini
- Free Testicular Screening: Feb. 17
- How Much Do You Know About Sex? - Free condoms event- Feb. 14- Guarini Campus

- Ask the Health Guru. Talk with The Nutritionist: Chiara Belli About Questions Regarding a Healthy Dietary Plan- Feb. 13- Tiber Café

The Dancing Body offered an additional opportunity to the events organized by The Office of Health and Well-being. Starting from February to April, this semester the workshop was originally scheduled in seven sessions:

- Feb. 7
- Feb. 21
- Feb. 28
- March 6
- March 13
- March 27
- April 17

College student anxiety

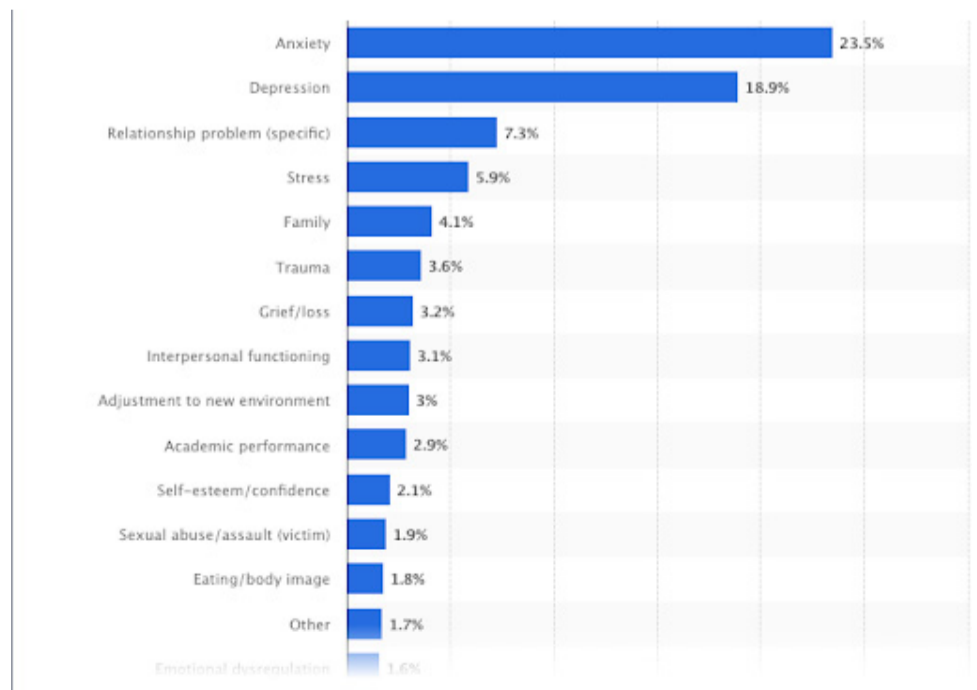
The interest in implementing the health and well-being initiatives within the university's community appears to be implemented at a national and global level. In a survey conducted by American clinicians on the main topics of concern for their college students' patients (during the academic year 2018-2019), anxiety resulted as the primary mental health concern, with 24% of the students experiencing threats with the same issue among different topics of concerns.

The results of the survey, which pooled a sample of 82,685 college students, were published by John Elflein, an American research health expert.

A JCU study abroad student from the American University of South Carolina, Blair Roughen, commented that since 2016, her university offers monthly sessions to pet and cuddle dogs during the most stressful periods at school.

“My best part was Violet the pit bull because I love pit bulls so much,” Shri-ta Reddy, a first- year student, who spoke to Roughen. “I was very stressed, and then I came here and everything just kind of like, I kind of just forgot about everything,” said Reddy.

Due to the fear of the virus outbreak increasing in Italy earlier in March, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) put Italy on travel warning level three, and the majority of the American degree seeking students studying at JCU went back home. According to some students, their universities said they would not be responsible for what happened to them if they stayed in Rome.



Courtesy of Statista. Primary mental health issues among college students 2018-2019. Feb. 6, 2020.

Continued...

JCU Mindfulness and Compassion Center

Nicola Petrocchi, Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist working at JCU as Professor of Positive Psychology, created a center for Mindfulness and Compassion, together with Professor Pilia.

According to Petrocchi, the center is a community with the goal of spreading knowledge on mental well-being.

Petrocchi said that, according to their view, morality and well-being are interconnected. “If we want to contribute to the world not only on a scientific point of view but also on a human point of view, the university should be able to provide ways to cultivate these kinds of qualities that are not just intellectual qualities but also other types.

“In the Mindfulness practice, we want to be able to be present in the moment but also understand compassion, which is the ability to be sensitive to the suffering of ourselves and of the others,” said Petrocchi. “It is about feeling the desire and the commitment to alleviate the suffering. I think the two are interconnected, especially in a university context.”

Roman universities take on well-being

Other Roman universities also provide well-being support to their students. The University of La Sapienza offers a research-intervention project, Noi Bene, financed by the university itself and designed to help the students develop self-awareness. Students can choose to participate in physical group meetings or opt for the online modality.

In addition, La Sapienza offers Fatti Vivo, a free counselling service for students scheduled in four meetings. In affiliation with the Roman yoga association, RYOGA, the university provides participation discounts to students and professors interested in yoga or pilates.

Roma Tre University has, instead, an affiliation with the Roman yoga center A.S.D Stud Yoga, which provides interested students and faculty members with a 15 percent discount on the monthly fee.

Roma Tre offers a counselling service organized in five meetings plus a follow up after three months. The service is addressed to all the students experiencing anxiety, personal or family threats but also other issues related to mental health.

Since May 2019, the University of Rome Tor Vergata offers a counselling service called Caris, open to all the students experiencing problems related to the university’s workload or any issue related to their degree path.

LuiSS University also provides a counselling service. LUISS ti ascolta is organized in three meetings aimed at helping the students to cope with pre-exams’ stress. During the COVID-19 quarantine, the university is also offering online yoga lessons.

Mindfulness and Stress

Professor Pilia commented on the benefits of mindfulness for the students’ wellness.

“Practicing mindfulness is a multidimensional experience. It’s very important for the students, especially those far away from home,” said Pilia. The relaxation technique helps in the stress management related to academic performance and to personal life, for instance, when living with roommates.

According to Pilia, the goal of implementing mindfulness in relation to the university’s community is to promote positive emotions, offer new and different solutions to support students’ personal and academic life.

Sara Lazar, neuroscientist at Harvard Medical School conducted an MRI study sampling people who were new to mindfulness to test its effects on psychological well-being.

After eight weeks of mindfulness-based reduction training programs, Lazar noticed that the subjects presented two areas of the brain increasing in volume, such as the Hippocampus and the Temporoparietal junction.

As expected, the amygdala (the brain region related to the stress response), diminished in mass.

The study demonstrated that when the amygdala decreases in volume, people are more able to cope with stress. The positive correlation between the amygdala and the individual level of stress indicates that mindfulness provides an efficient stress coping strategy.

In relation to the stress-coping strategies within the JCU community, Petrocchi identified an increasing interest towards mindfulness and well-being programs.

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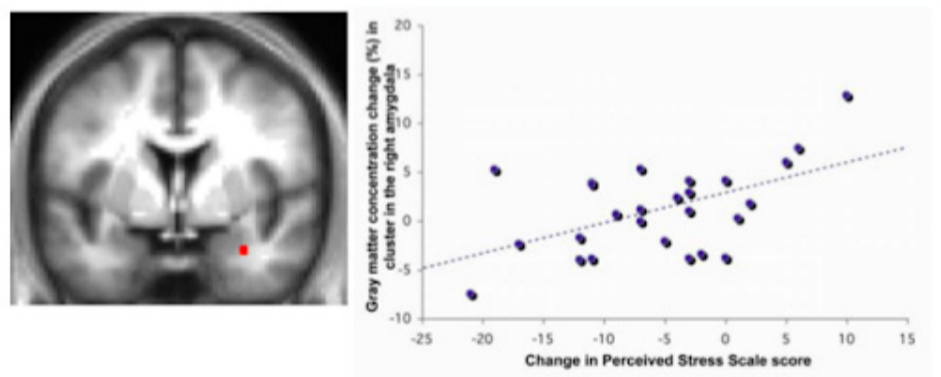
The Mission of JCU Office of Health and Wellbeing

“I believe it is crucial to support students. University can be stressful and living abroad at such a young age can be destabilizing,” said Giulia Maggiori, JCU Office of Health and Well-Being intern. “Students need to know that university is a safe place and that asking for help is totally fine.”

The JCU Office of Health and Wellbeing has the mission to support students who need help adjusting themselves to the Italian health system. Also, the office provides mental support through mindfulness and counselling centers and organizes initiatives to promote prevention and support among students.

“The body occupies an external space and has its own internal space. The space of the self. Listening to him, knowing him, helps us to become aware of our finiteness as human beings, and, at the same time, of our infinite possibilities,” said Professor Filardi. “Above all, it makes us aware of how important the positive relationship with the other person is other than us.”

Change in Amygdala Gray Matter Density is Correlated with Change in Perceived Stress



Courtesy of Positive Psychology. Changes in the volume of amygdala change the perception of stress. Jan 17, 2020

JCU Remote Health Resources

The JCU Health Instagram page publishes a sum-up post of all the support resources offered by the JCU Office of Health and Wellbeing during the quarantine.

- JCU Emergency number: +39-331-656-1907
- On-call Doctor: +39-320-406-5709
- VSEE and Zoom Counseling: counseling@johncabot.edu
- Psychiatrist prescriptions: counseling@johncabot.edu
- Emotional Support: 800-969-239 from Italy and +44-20-7938-0870 from abroad
- Athletics resources: athletics@johncabot.edu
- Spiritual guidance: lufrani@icloud.com / Fra-Riccardo- Skype

The spread of the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy uproots Spring Break plans and a dream semester of American Study Abroad Students

Disclaimer: Certain information about the pandemic lockdowns are subject to change.

By Blair Roughen



An empty student apartment in Trastevere after students pack their belongings.
Photo by Blair Roughen

ALPHARETTA, Ga.— Spring Break looked different this year as many students who were studying abroad in Italy were no longer packing for an exciting week-long trip to various destinations in Europe with their friends. Instead, they were packing to return to the United States after the rapid spread of COVID-19 in Italy resulted in the CDC raising its travel advisory of Italy to a Level 3 on February 28, which recommends avoiding non-essential travel.

The study abroad students enrolled at John Cabot University in Rome were left with little choice after the advisory was upgraded. The Level 3: Reconsider Travel warning began a rapid succession of American universities notifying their students in Italy that they were required to return home. JCU welcomed 617 visiting students this semester.

“When I heard the news I felt shocked and then I was very disappointed and frustrated because the situation felt like it was suddenly out of my control,” said Lindsay Burrige, JCU study abroad student from University of Missouri.

Burrige said she woke up to an email the day after the advisory upgrade from her home institution, the University of Missouri, stating that due to the guidance from the CDC and in accordance with the MU Student International Travel Policy, all studying abroad in Italy would be cancelled for the Spring Semester.

In the email notifying students of the cancellation, the University of Missouri stated: “Students planning to return to the U.S. should make immediate plans to depart Italy preferably no later than Monday, March 9.”

Considering most universities that had students enrolled in JCU were calling their students home, John Cabot had announced that it would organize remote learning options for students who wished to return home. This remote learning option became available on March 16 following JCU Spring break. Not only are study abroad students continuing their studies via remote learning but so are the rest of JCU students, as Italy continues under a countrywide lockdown that began on March 12.

Where were abroad students planning to go for spring break?

The popular travel destination for abroad students during this spring break was Barcelona, Spain. Students had planned to enjoy Barcelona’s nightlife and the three-day musical festival Abroadfest during their trip. According to its website, Abroadfest is a weekend long festival created to gather college students abroad in Europe to enjoy EDM music. Due to the required return home, students found themselves taking a loss on the cost of flights, activities and accommodations booked for spring break.

The University of South Carolina (UofSC) is another college that had students abroad this semester. UofSC Study Abroad Office’s Graduate Assistant of Advising Hannah Quire said that over 800 students were abroad during Spring 2020. Five of those students were studying at John Cabot University.

On Feb. 29, UofSC emailed students who were studying in Italy that they strongly recommended students return home to the United States:

“Our office works with Student Health Services to ensure we have accurate information about the disease itself. We also follow the orders of the Department of State and the Center for Disease Control – as soon as either of these elevate their travel advisories, we make calls about our programs. There is also a committee called SITOC (Student International Travel Oversight Committee) that monitors these updates and makes decisions about our programming – they were the ones who called our spring and summer programming.”

Skyla Lewis is a UofSC student who was studying in Florence, Italy. During her return home to Boston, Lewis had to go through additional airport screening. “At my gate, before boarding my flight we had to wait in line to step into a circle where they took my temperature by holding an iPad in front of my forehead,” said Lewis.

Once she returned home, Lewis participated in a 14-day self-quarantine per CDC recommendation for anyone who returned from a Level Three or Level Four country. “Having to quarantine for 14 days after returning home really sucked,” said Lewis. “One of the best experiences of my life was just taken away from me, and now I couldn’t even go out and have fun or see people from home.”

Many other students who were abroad from UofSC hoped to return to campus in Columbia, South Carolina, after completing their quarantine. They planned to live on campus and complete their online classes there so they could be with friends and still enjoy college life.

Unfortunately, that no longer became an option. Colleges in the United States Shut Down. UofSC shut down its campus.

“It is with heavy hearts but firm resolve that in consultation with our senior administration and with guidance from public health experts, we have made the decision to extend remote learning for students through the remainder of the Spring semester,” said UofSC President Bob Caslen in an email to students and faculty.

UofSC is not alone in their decision to close. According to a report by Education Week on March 20, at least 114,000 U.S. public and private schools are closed in an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19.

“Everyone I know was heartbroken when we heard the news that school was officially canceled for the rest of the school year,” said Elisabeth Maggio, junior at UofSC. “I had a feeling it was going to happen but was trying to have faith that we would get to return to our campus and our friends.” Maggio said how since college is only four years long it’s disappointing to have a half of a semester taken away from her. She said she is happy that she still has another year left, unlike many of her friends who are seniors.

May Commencement Ceremonies

University of South Carolina’s class of 2020 college experience got cut short. Senior Tyra Moss said that she burst into tears when she heard the news from President Caslen. “I now am missing out on getting to enjoy and cherish all of my final moments on a campus that has become my home,” said Moss.

UofSC announced that their commencement ceremonies would be rescheduled for early August, which was a relief to many seniors. Institutions like the University of Georgia and Georgia Southern cancelled their May commencement ceremonies and did not offer a plan to reschedule them like UofSC did. Seniors at these universities have created petitions on Change.com for graduation to be reinstated at Georgia Universities. So far, the petition had 1,740 signatures.

The simple white t-shirt that can reveal your story.

By *Elisabetta Giacobbe*

From one day to another, everything can change, but who could have thought that our routine would have changed in this way? We need to stay home to prevent the spread of infection from the “coronavirus,” one person per family can go out to buy food, we need to wear masks and wash our hands every time we come into contact with something, or someone, from the outside. Offices, schools, and universities are closed, and we do not even know until when. Even the small things, such as drinking a coffee, having a funny dinner with friends, became illegal. It is true, our routine has changed drastically. Before, when everything was normal, the first thoughts were: “What will I wear for this weekend, for my birthday, for my date?” or “I have an important work meeting, what should I wear?”

These are our personal fashion moments. And for the time being, they no longer exist. They have disappeared in the midst of mandates to work, and studying from home and other precautions against the mystery of the coronavirus. With this time, we feel that we have lost a little bit of ourselves. And the worst thing is that a fundamental part of ourselves is based on how we relate to the people around us. For example, a lot of students are not used to living with their families anymore, and we are defined, in part, by our community. It seems that we are turned off, we have been put on mute. We dress to tell who we are and to tell our stories; nowadays, everyone looks alike.

We are used to being among people, in large groups, and around chatter with people that we don't know. As the fashion critic Robin Givhan said: “We are accustomed to slipping on a mantle of public personhood.” And when this moment is no longer part of our routine, without that fashion moment, we can turn unmoored.

We dress up in our professional outfits to catch the attention of clients, or to impress a boss. How many times have we heard: “It is fundamental for your first impression when you have an interview. How you dress, or how you behave.” At the end of our choices, there is always a reason why we have made that decision: “Why did I choose to wear this, instead of that?” Maybe because that day we wanted to express or say something else.

Anyone who works outside home, dressing for the office - even if that office is a classroom, an assembly line or an executive suite - means that you are taking a place in the social order; you are part of a community; you are participating in something. Most clothes do not necessarily describe our whole persona. But on the other hand, work clothes tell us we are part of something. The uniform of a school, that doctor's gown, the attorney's suit: they are all reminders of connectivity.

Working from home and never taking off your pajamas can seem a feeling of liberation, as always staying in your comfort zone. But going through an entire day in loungewear, it is easy to lose your persona, your sense of purpose. Our clothes build our barriers. People who work from home often have the need to change their outfit, anything else to announce that their day has started. To wake up, and be ready to face the world because, without the world, who are you?

It happens that we understand how a person is from their clothes. We sit in our favourite bar with our jeans and a simple branded white t-shirt, and we can make a political statement or a childish joke. What about wearing our favourite musician t-shirt? We are telling, silently, that we love that kind of music—whether it is rock, classic, or hip-hop.

Fashion is a great form of communication, without never saying a word, you are behind your message because you are, in fact, wearing it.

There is something that probably we have never thought of, but clothing is a form of communication.

Clothes are also a form of financial success. Luxurious brands such as Chanel, Tom Ford, and Hermes, push consumers to pay a significant amount for products that maybe at the end of the day, they do not need. But, these kinds of purchases can also tell a story about striving and achieving; the satisfaction of having bought a bag with your

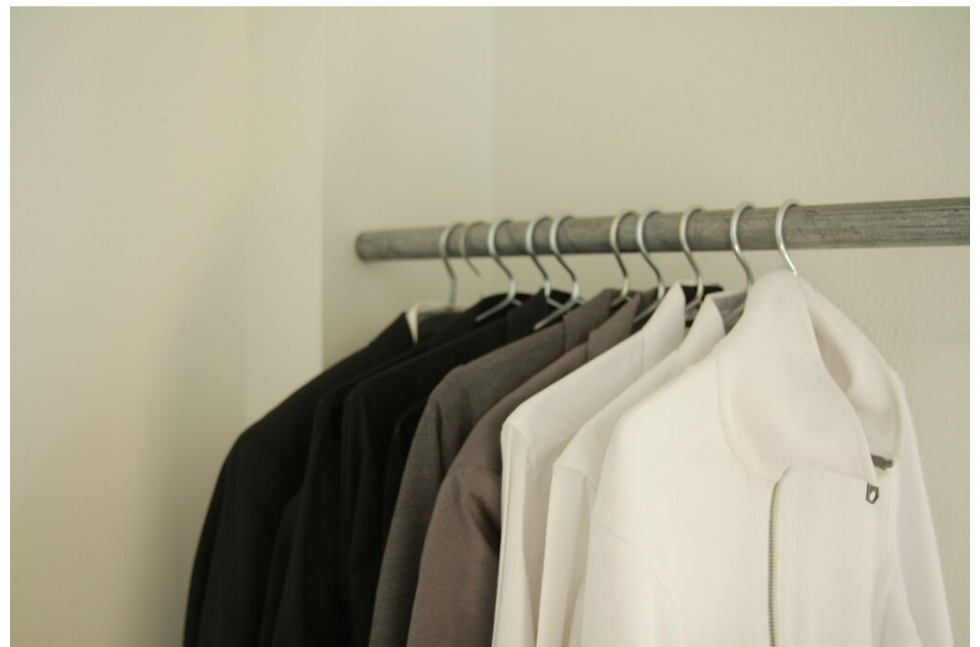


Photo by Petter Palander on Flickr

own money, with your first salary. We should stop for a second and think that clothes give the opportunity to say a message out loud, even if we walk alone in a room, and sometimes a little applause from the public is just what someone needs.

Without these fashion moments, we have lost the ability to easily relate, to say something - even when we are too afraid to do something. We do not have the possibility anymore to publicly celebrate who we are or to simply enjoy those small moments that give us the pleasure to feel that we are doing something good to animate the visual landscape. The joy in wearing a new pair of shoes or a dress is not only in putting them on for your satisfaction. It is in taking them out for the public to inspect; in this way, they can become another piece of your story—the piece that is always evolving and expanding.

When we ask ourselves: “What should I wear today?” In reality, we are asking a number of questions. “Who am I?” “What am I expecting today from my self?” “How do I see my life moving on?”

In this difficult moment, when we have to stay home, and our routine changes drastically, when we cannot find a reason anymore to consider our apparel, even for a small moment, even for the briefest outing, we go out, the silent button lights up. And our adventure, in all its grandeur, distinction and humanity, goes untold. So as we need to stay at home, our clothes can be our small talk. While we go along the street, in our social distancing, our clothes become an essential part for our persona; they remind us that at a certain point we will go back to speaking to each other again.

And you, who do you want to be?

Leaving New York: Chronicles of the Big Apple during COVID-19

By Marilù Ciabattoni

Friday, March 13, 2020

Everything happened so fast, too fast for me to even realize. Faster than the lifestyle in New York. In a few days I lost it all, and I don't know when I'm going to have it back. I wish I had a choice, but I don't, and this is what's bothering me the most right now.

On Monday, I came back to New York after I visited some relatives in Philadelphia. That day, no one seemed to be concerned about the virus, not a bit. People were walking on 7th Avenue as usual. New York was still a city. On Tuesday, my classmates started hearing rumors about the school closing, and a petition was going around, too. Brooklyn College—and all the universities included in the CUNY system—was reluctant to close, because unlike NYU, the New School and Columbia, Brooklyn College is a public school and many students enrolled don't have the resources they need at home. Some of them are even homeless, I heard. Some had kids and others had full-time jobs. On Wednesday, it was official: starting on Thursday, March 12, classes would be suspended and resume online after a one-week recess.

Mohamed called me today. He says many schools around the world have asked their exchange students to go back and he suggested that I go back, too. I know my parents will freak out if I stay here, and that they'll say anything to convince me to get on that plane; I know they won't be serene until I'm home with them, safe and sound.

This is not what was supposed to happen, but I have no choice. I'm forced to leave New York.

Saturday, March 14, 2020

The unnatural silence is deafening. And I can't move. Every muscle in my body is stiff. It refuses the idea of helping me stand up, blocked by the idea of having wasted time, effort and money—my parents' money—to pursue a project that was going to end anyways. I don't think anyone realizes how much it takes to get a Visa to live in the United States even for short periods of time; like in my case, four to five months. Everyone—parents, friends, the Exchange Office—are “suggesting” that I go home as if it wasn't a big deal to come all this way. Although I know they care about me, I don't think any of them truly understands how much faith and work I put into this. Before I fell asleep yesterday, I prayed to God that it was all a bad dream, and that none of this is really happening. And then, the situation got even worse.

Mayor De Blasio has declared a state of emergency. I still don't know what it means exactly, but even my roommates, who don't tend to trust national authorities, are starting to worry.

I argue with my father on the telephone, begging him to let me stay. I say, Simba will take good care of me, and Orlando will, too. But he's begging me to come back. “Come home,” he said, as if implying that I don't perceive New York as a second home.

He is worried about me. More worried than I've been in the past few days. He's scared for my life. Why would I put my life at risk like this? He hangs up, and I start sobbing. Simba gets close to me and hugs my shoulders, resting her lion-like head on mine, tiny in comparison.

“Is everything okay, love?”

I shake my head no as she wraps her arms around me even more.

“I'm sorry,” she whispers, and I know she really means it.

And then, good news.

Garrett calls me and says he can come to Brooklyn and stay until Sunday late afternoon. I start feeling a little better. Simba and Orlando make a midnight dinner for us. She tells us about her experience during 9/11, as if talking about difficult times in the past was the best way to deal with the present.

“For the first time, the city was silent. The smoke in the sky lasted for days, it was scary!”

We get in bed at 3 a.m. The sirens of an ambulance down the street momentarily shatter the silence.

“Sounds like New York,” Garrett whispers from his bed.

“Yes,” I say. “It's the sound of New York.”

As I'm listening to my very last thoughts for the day, I wonder when I'll understand what all of this means. The big revelation. The moment when everything will finally make sense. Then I realized that I had the chance to see New York at the time of COVID-19. No matter how painful it is, this is the life that we're experiencing. This is what History feels like. I just wish I could leave a mark in the city... Something that inevitably proves I've lived there, that I made all of this come true. Then I remind myself that nothing is eternal and that even the most heartfelt emotions come to an end. Still, I want the city to listen. New York, do you hear me?

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

There's no time to be sad, no time to rest. Actually, there's no time at all. Garrett left two days ago at around 6 p.m. We drove through Flatbush Avenue, bypassing Prospect Park and heading to the Manhattan Bridge, into Chinatown. Everywhere, there are signs in Asian languages we don't understand and people wearing face masks. We found a similar situation in Jackson Heights and Greenpoint, where we stopped for lunch. New Yorkers won't slow down even with a global pandemic threatening to put an end to their activities.

Apart from the two times I took Uber, I had never gone around the city by car. I got used to holding each one of my belongings in the subway, where you could encounter any sort of human being on the planet. And this is the beauty of this city, too. The energy, and the people. Cars can be convenient, but I'd much rather take public transportation. After all, the MTA and walking are what New York is all about.

Anyhow...

Today, I felt I had to end my study abroad experience right in the place where I started it, around two months ago. And that place is down under the Manhattan Bridge overpass. In one word, Dumbo. After stopping on Nevin Street and walking around Downtown Brooklyn for one hour, I decided to go to the Dumbo Market and do what I saw many locals doing; grabbing food and taking it away. Noodles, edamame beans, mushrooms, meatballs and Buffalo tender chicken wings. I know what the perfect place is.

Sitting on the rooftop of the Brooklyn Historical Society, I'm eating my 20-dollars worth of food while keeping my eyes fixed on the view in front of me—one of the best views in the universe, if you ask me. It isn't sunny but the sky is bright, and it frames Downtown Manhattan better than any cinematographer ever could. Big cities don't need big movies to shine. They shine from their own light.

I look down at the few people walking on the streets alongside the river, six feet apart from each other. It's not chaotic, but the worst hasn't happened yet. Not here. China and Italy know how big of a problem this virus is, but not New York. Nor the New Yorkers. Especially them.

I honestly wish I could linger in the bliss of ignorance a little longer, pretend nothing's really happening and that this is just a joke, a big fat joke that isn't funny. I don't know what will happen to me. I can't predict what this year will look like. If it'll be a shitshow until the very end or if everything will calm down in some time, which is what everyone hopes for.

But now... What could I desire more in my life right now? Ladies and gentlemen, once again: New York F**king City.

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Time to say goodbye to the greatest borough there is. Brooklyn. Simba helped me carry my baggage to 42nd Street, where I'm now waiting for the bus to arrive and take me to the airport in Newark, New Jersey. She calls someone on the phone, warning that she's “running a little bit late” and that she will be there soon—wherever “there” is. One thing's for sure: there's no close “there” in New York F**king City. She hugs me and says she'll prioritize my booking before anyone else's next time I'm in town.

“F**k Corona,” she screams from the other side of the street, about to enter the subway.

Fast-forward to a few hours later. I'm sitting next to gate C121, my Starbucks matcha iced latte next to my laptop. I've just called Garrett. He wished me a good flight and asked me to call him once I arrived in Munich, where I will stop before taking the plane to Rome. Mentally, I prepare myself as I adjust my face mask and grab my hand baggage, repeating to myself that my dreams aren't cancelled, but on pause. That this is the place where I want to spend the rest of my life. That this is everything but an end. New York, I hear you.

Visibility And Support: A Letter

Fuller Prize Winner

By Micayla Mirabella

Dear Reader,

How many LGBTQ+ people do you know? Here's the truth about us: our sexuality and/or gender is an invisible identity. This means you might know someone personally but not know they are queer until they tell you. So you probably know more LGBTQ+ people than you think.

Let me start off with a disclaimer: I am queer. My views, opinions, and experiences represent me, and me only. Each and every experience is unique to each person's individual reality.

Additionally, sexual/gender identity is private to each individual unless they choose to share it with others. (Basically, it is not cool to out people. Please do not do that).

Here's the thing about coming out of the closet: many people do it, but every coming out story is different and personal. The whole idea of "coming out" seems silly to me. I often feel frustrated that my straight friends do not have to come out. But in a society that is very heteronormative, it is something that many queer people do at some point.

I grew up in a liberal household so I would say I was lucky when I came out. Not everyone's coming out story is positive. Not everyone is safe to come out at all. All students at JCU should step on campus feeling safe—no matter how they identify.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Despite JCU's overwhelmingly accepting and non-discriminatory atmosphere, I have heard homophobic and transphobic slurs, comments, and full discussions throughout my time here at JCU — either from others or directly in front of me. When these things circulate, queer people become more and more invisible and this is unacceptable and heartbreaking.

It is important to shine a light on this community of people who are so often in the dark. If we are quiet, we will not be heard, or worse: we become invisible. Listen to your LGBTQ+ peers. Do not speak for us, give us a chance to speak. This gives straight allies an opportunity to learn from us and we can feel truly heard. This can create a more inclusive and less divisive community at JCU.

Education is an important part of this conversation and I intend to learn more, myself, so I can be better informed to support my fellow queer friends.

The LGBTQ+ community is a celebration of beautiful, strong, hopeful individuals who want (and deserve) positive visibility, love, and most of all, acceptance. We want to be treated with respect, no matter who we are, how we identify, or who we love.

Whew! That was a lot of information. Guess what? We have barely scratched the surface on this topic. That's why I think opening a dialogue can lead to more understanding and empathy. And I think that is a beautiful thing.

Best,

A slightly concerned, yet hopeful queer person



Photo by Jaxor84 on Pixabay

How The Fashion Industry Is Joining The Fight Against COVID-19

by Sofia Carlettini

By supporting each other and helping those who are most vulnerable among us, we will be able to overcome this crisis: united, even more than before.

-Alessandro Michele, Gucci Creative Director

Since coronavirus has been hitting the world so hard, the fashion industry has also been affected very seriously by the pandemic. Milan and Paris fashion weeks have been overshadowed by the arrival of COVID-19. Many fashion shows have been canceled for safety reasons and the spread of the virus has inevitably led people to avoid participating in any type of fashion show. Furthermore, the global outbreak of COVID-19 has caused the indefinite closing of many fashion houses, such as Nike, Net-a-Porter and Reformation.

Although the fashion industry is undoubtedly suffering from the effects of the virus, it is also finding ways to join the battle against COVID-19. Here are some remarkable ones:

Giorgio Armani

Not only did Giorgio Armani choose to close his fashion show to physical audiences in order to livestream it in an empty room during Milan Fashion Week, he has also converted its Italian factories into sites for the production of protective masks and equipment for healthcare workers. Moreover, the luxury house has already pledged 1.2 million euros to donate to Italy's Civil Protection and to support four hospitals in Italy: Luigi Sacco, San Raffaele, the Istituto dei Tumori in Milan, as well as Rome's Istituto Lazzaro Spalanzani.

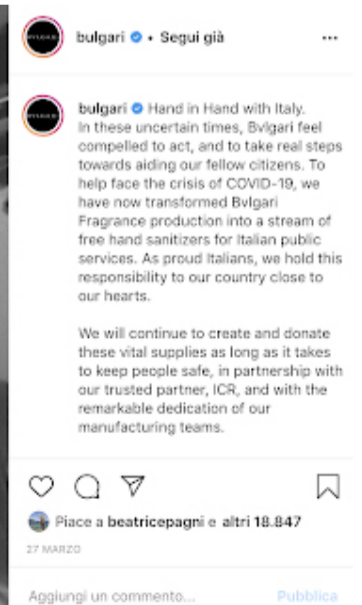
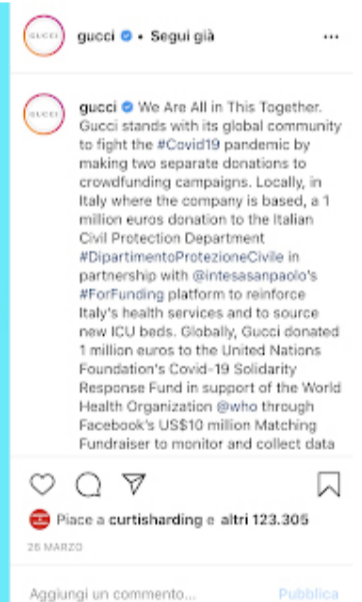
Gucci

"This pandemic calls us to an unexpected task, but it is a call to which we respond decisively, advocating the selfless work carried out by health workers, doctors and nurses on the front lines every day in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, in Italy and in the rest of the world," said Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele. In order to help the fight against coronavirus, Gucci decided to donate 1 million euros to the Italian Civil Protection Department and another million euros to the World Health Organization's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund.

Bulgari

"I believe as a major economic actor and symbol of Italy, Bulgari has a responsibility to contribute to the national effort to help prevent, fight and eradicate COVID-19. Thanks to our fragrances expertise we have been able to develop together with ICR a 'hand cleansing gel with sanitizer' which will be manufactured in our Lodi Factory already making our high-end perfumes and hotel amenities," said Jean-Christophe Babin, Bulgari CEO. Bulgari decided to join the fight against the pandemic in a quite original way: it will manufacture thousands of hand sanitizers in recyclable bottles that will be distributed to hospitals throughout Italy in the next weeks.

At this unprecedented time, it is important to know that the fashion industry is doing its best to fight against COVID-19 by launching useful initiatives and donating to organizations and hospitals. Only through collaboration, altruism, and strength will we be able to defeat the virus and we will finally reclaim our future.



Words from the Field

By Caitlyn Davis

This article is inspired from an interview conducted to northern-Italy doctor, Dr. Rocchi. We appreciate his willingness to answer/discuss a few questions with us.

Dr. Rocchi, a graduate from Pisa University, has been a doctor since 1990 and works at Massa Hospital which is located at Massa-Carrara, a small town in northern Italy. Massa-Carrara was not part of the red zone but Dr. Rocchi has been treating patients who are infected by the virus for the past few months. Thankfully, he has not been infected.

Dr. Rocchi is one of the many healthcare workers up north who have been working tirelessly to fight the spread of this pandemic. As of this week, Italy has around 95,000 active cases and the number of deaths close to 16,000 with an estimate of 900 deaths a day. Since the northern region of the country has been hit the hardest, the pandemic has caused retired doctors to return to work to help the growing number of patients. Some medical students have been allowed to skip their exams and graduate early so that they could also help out.

Hopefully, according to recent data from John Hopkins University, Italy may be approaching the “flattening of the curve” sooner than previously thought. On April 6, the number of cases around Italy was 3,599, which is half of the number of cases that were reported on March 21—two weeks prior. That number was close to 6,600: the country’s highest increase in daily cases. Of course, this doesn’t mean the pandemic is close to ending.

Dr. Rocchi is the father of a friend of mine, he does not speak English so I asked my friend if it was alright if he could send my ques-

tions and translate his answers for me. When we asked Dr. Rocchi if there was anything he wanted people to know more about, he said he wants people to, “become more aware how dangerous [the virus] is and respect the suggested measures of security.”

These security measures refer, of course, to the lockdown. There has been a ban on any movement inside the country and businesses that are considered non-essential have been shut down. According to The Guardian, within the first few weeks of the outbreak, 43,000 Italians were charged with violating the lockdown and were fined up to 3,000 euros. In one case, a man in Sicily who was tested positive for the coronavirus was arrested for going to the grocery store after being diagnosed. If he is convicted for violating the lockdown measures, he could face up to twelve years in prison. Some may see this as extreme, but this incident highlights the seriousness of the situation that Dr. Rocchi alluded to. The World Health Organization also advises civilians to respect the lockdown as a protective measure against the virus.

We asked Dr. Rocchi if he felt Italy was prepared for this pandemic, and while he disagrees with that statement, he does say that the country is providing to “...all people the best healthcare system for free. It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor, you’ll receive the best health assistance and treatment.”

Discussing if the pandemic would end, Dr. Rocchi said, “it’s hard to predict when everything will be over, it is a plague spread all over the world. It will be long and harsh.”

Despite being at the front lines of this pandemic, this dedicated doctor is not panicking. The future is uncertain, but it is important to have hope and to stay healthy.

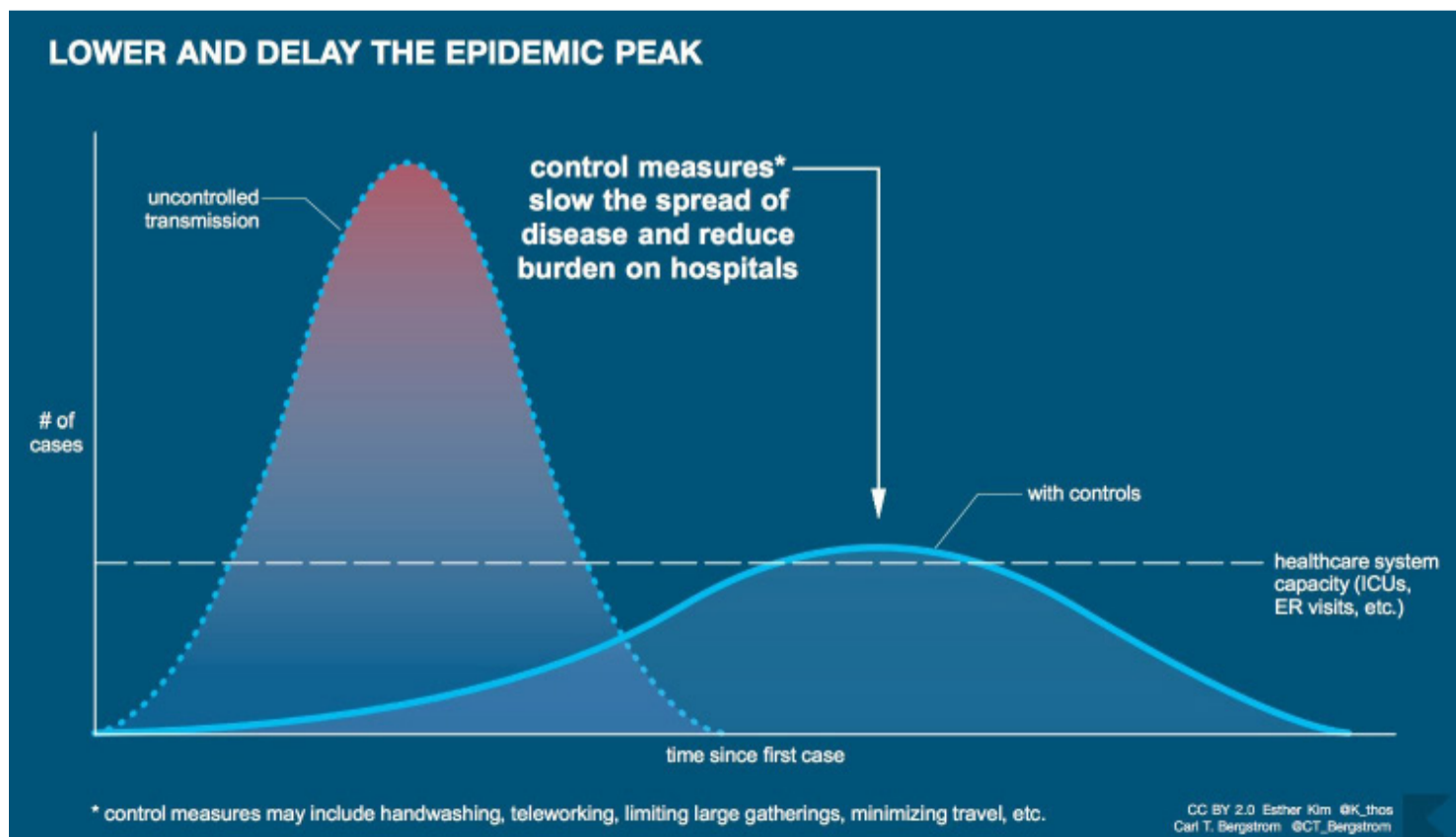


Photo by Wikimedia Commons

The Fashion World Versus COVID19

More than 14 fashion houses and fashion celebrities donate money and raise campaigns to ease COVID-19, amongst Armani and Ferragni.

By Elisabetta Giacobbe

ROME— Twice a year, the fashion houses of the world present their collection of dresses for the upcoming season when retailers, Instagram influencers, buyers and reporters travel to New York, London, Milan and Paris. This year, however, fashion houses were more concerned with fighting COVID-19 by money donations.

According to the New York Times, the COVID-19 commonly known as coronavirus, has infected the majority of countries around the world with 3,021,049 recorded cases until now. The first infections from the virus in Italy were reported during the Milan and Paris fashion weeks in the first week of February. In Milan, the stylist Giorgio Armani cancelled his fashion show and offered a live stream. According to a statement from the brand, Armani took this decision “to support national efforts to safeguard public health and to safeguard the well-being of all his guests by not having them attend crowded spaces.”

Luisa Spagnoli responded similarly. Her show happened behind closed doors. The National Chamber of Italian Fashion, which is based in Milan and led by Giuseppe Modenese, cancelled its closing awards event to safeguard the well-being of people. Michael Kors has been forced to cancel his Milan-based event, in which he had to celebrate his brand’s 007 capsule collection on Sunday night, citing a government ordinance. A significant number of editors, buyers, and influencers were considerably absent from shows during the Milan fashion week; others were given the possibility to work from home. Condé Nast’s CEO Roger Lynch advised those who can work from home to do so until the end of the outbreak, since a person from the company was suspected of having COVID19.

Innumerable brand and design houses had to close their doors and postpone events and runaway shows, including the Council of Fashion Designers (CFDA) of America awards, and the Met Gala in New York. Departmental stores like Nordstrom, Selfridges, Macy’s, and Neiman Marcus closed to prevent the spread of the virus due to government decrees.

Some of the most famous luxurious brands, such as Versace, cancelled the show for its collection for May 16 in the United States. Other brands like Chanel will postpone a repeat showing of its Métiers d’Art, which was scheduled to take place in Beijing, China in May. Hermes also postponed its show, since it was scheduled for April 28. When the virus was spreading in China, Burberry predicted that COVID-19 would have a worse impact, so it postponed a show scheduled in Shanghai, according to the Business Insider report in January.

Bernstein company predicted the loss for luxurious brands.

According to a report from investment manager company Bernstein, the virus epidemic will cost the luxury market around \$43 billion in sales. The Business Insider reports that the Boston Consulting Group collaborated with Bernstein to conduct a survey with 28 luxury brand senior executives in order to calibrate the impact they expected the virus to have.

It was not mentioned which executives were included in the survey. These executives assumed to see a €30 to €40 billion loss in 2020 due to the spread of the virus. According to the Business Insider, 43 percent of the surveyed executives said they expected sales to be impacted for the next three to six months.

Fashion brands turn to making face masks.

The French luxury group Kering decided to import three million surgical masks from China to donate the French health service. Balenciaga and Yves Saint Laurent are also creating masks, even if it is still unclear when they will release them. On March 22, the French luxury group Kering said in a statement: “The French workshop of Kering’s Houses Balenciaga and Yves Saint Laurent are preparing to manufacture masks while complying with the strictest health protection measures for their staff members, with production getting underway as soon as the manufacturing process and materials have been approved by the relevant authorities.”

Gucci, which is also owned by the French multinational, has decided to donate over one million masks and 55,000 pairs of medical overalls to Italy. Also, Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy, LVMH, has ordered a total of 40 million FFP2 disposable particulate respirators and surgical masks from China in order to give them to healthcare workers.

Designer Giorgio Armani gave €1.25 million (\$1.4 million) to numerous Italian hospitals and institutions.

Giorgio Armani, who planned to show his new collection on the very last days of Milan fashion week, revealed that he would no longer present the collection. However, Armani surprised Milan with a remote solution, the show was filmed, and then posted on the brand’s social media page. Moreover, Armani donated \$1.4 million to a range of Italian hospitals and institutions, such as Luigi Sacco and San Raffaele hospitals, the Istituto dei Tumori in Milan, and the Istituto Spallanzani in Rome. According to the Italian newspaper La Stampa, Armani expanded his donation to other hospitals in Bergamo, Piacenza and Versilia. The stylist got the decision to convert all their productions into lab coats for the doctors who are the ones who risk their lives to help the infected people. This leads to a total donation of 2 million euros.

Patrizia Barbieri, the mayor and president of the Province of Piacenza, who recently recovered from the virus, wanted to thank Armani for the help. Barbieri wrote a message to the stylist:

“Dear Giorgio Armani, I have read the beautiful words that you dedicated to Piacenza. In these critical days distinguished by bonding grief, you have been able to reach our community’s soul. I would like to thank you for this: your exhortation to rediscover, in our own identity, the resources to react, is a precious gift for us all.”

Chiara Ferragni, and Fedez make a donation to create an intensive care area of Milan’s San

Raffaele hospital.

The digital entrepreneur, blogger, and designer Chiara Ferragni and her husband, the Italian rapper Fedez, donated 100,000 euros to support the creation of new beds for the intensive care area in Milan’s hospital, the San Raffaele.

“We hope that this initiative will raise awareness among people in Italy and abroad of the current coronavirus crisis, which is affecting all of us,” both said on their Instagram pages.

They also decided to create a campaign, under the name of “Coronavirus, we strengthen the intensive care,” to raise more money for the San Raffaele. The couple has raised over 4 million euros, in less than a week, with more than 200,000 donors. The donations will be used to buy ventilators, non-invasive ventilation devices, and hemodynamic monitors.

The project was created in collaboration with Professor Alberto Zangrillo, head of the cardiovascular and intensive care department of San Raffaele hospital, available at gofoundme.com/f/coronavirus-terapia-intensiva. Anyone can donate starting at 5 euros.

The influencer also created a capsule collection in collaboration with the cookie brand Oreo, in which the money will entirely go to fight the coronavirus emergency in Italy.

“The launch of the capsule collection was to be made weeks ago, but with this situation, we had to postpone everything,” said Ferragni via her Instagram account. “We decided to go on with the project, also for the effort that a lot of people have put in it, we chose to give all the money for the fight of the virus. If you buy something, you will do something good. This is a contribution that I hope to give to my country in a difficult moment like this.”

Ferragni communicated on Instagram about the seriousness of the virus. She encouraged her followers to be more cautious and take all the required measures to fight the crisis, also shared positivity and strength by asking Italians to stay together during this crucial historical moment.

More recently, San Raffaele Hospital also received a 200,000 euro donation from Donatella Versace and daughter Allegra Versace Beck.

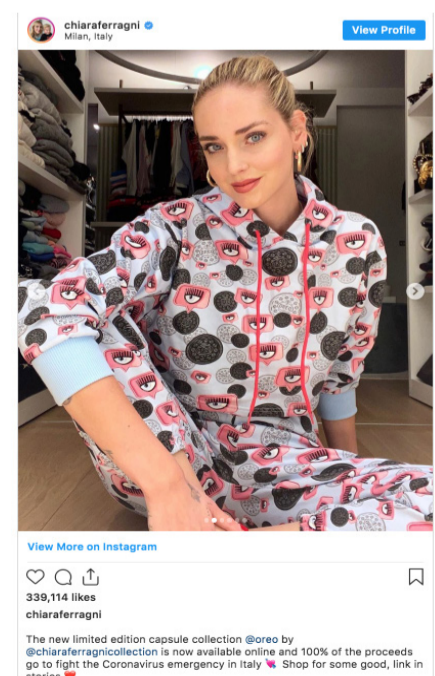


Photo from Ferragni’s Instagram account

A 21-year-old living in the 21st century

By Caterina Fassina

Nine months ago, I moved to Rome from Milan. There, my life changed. I built a family with new friends coming from many different countries. I started to find my path in this world, and my heart was building projects to which I was devoting body and soul. Nothing coming from the outside could rip the right I deserved to look for my self-fulfillment. I'm a Western 21-year-old woman living in the 21st century. All my life taught me that hard work and dedication could get me whenever and wherever I wanted to. I had no attachments nor obligations to other people but me. I was an individual living in a country full of art and traditions, but I belonged to myself only.

On March 7, I went back to Milan to celebrate my birthday at my parents' house. I took clothes and books for three days and nothing more. I said goodbye to my friends in Rome, being sure that the following Thursday we would have enjoyed the music of Trastevere's street singers again. That night, the Italian government shut Lombardy's borders down. Two days later, Italy was blocked. A girl that has always been on the move was stuck in a place where she did not belong. My projects swept away with a cough. For the first time, I came to know that I am not invincible. We are not invincible.

The age average of "vulnerable people" against the novel coronavirus lowered under 55 years old. For the first time, I saw my dad worried. I keep telling my grandpas not to step outside. I am concerned when my mom has to go grocery shopping. Every 30 minutes, my parents tell us to open the windows and to wash our hands. Every time a phone rings, a shock of fear shakes my spine. Every time my dad coughs, I already picture him at the hospital. Even smart-working or smart-studying becomes difficult when you feel helpless.

I showed grandpa my very first published article from a 4-meter distance, because I did not want to harm him. At that moment, his glance taught me the power of embraces. I have retained myself too many times from showing love because I feared to seem too emotional. I have censored myself too many times from asking for an embrace not to be labeled as weak. I did not give my friends the affection our friendship deserved, because I was too busy. We always say, "see you later," because we never feel ready to utter the last goodbye. We never think that we do not own our lives. Now they packed their things up and went back to their homelands, and I do not know when I will feel their lips on my cheeks again. We try to make ourselves closer by texting each other to be safe.

All my personal belongings remained in Rome. I found out I can live without anything but people to take care of and people who care about me. Suddenly, the love I need could be torn away by something I cannot control. The love I can give could be gifted to no one. That's the worst thing about COVID-19: the fear of losing love.

Our leaders are choosing what is more valuable between business and life. History will judge them on that choice. I have been told that the internet is a democratizing force. That is false. An illness is. COVID-19 takes politicians and priests. Writers and journalists. Doctors and nurses. Italians and immigrants. Still, the health-care systems around the world are not democratic at all. We are noticing the global polarization we ignored because we were the strongest side of the binary. We blamed refugees because they docked on our coasts. Many students, myself too, tasted a small portion of what they feel and think. Some of us are split from our families; others

rushed back home, leaving their belongings behind.

I'm a Western 21-year-old woman living in the 21st century. I tasted all kinds of freedom, including and above all, freedom of movement. Now, I am a Western 21-year-old who cannot move, even if living in the 21st century.

We like to think of ourselves as islands, but we are not. Our decisions affect people around us instead. We do not live for ourselves only, for better and for worse. Everybody is putting their skills at the service of the community. Everybody sings on their balconies at 6 p.m., musicians live stream for three hours per day on Instagram, museums offer home vision options, and I am writing this. Everyone is contributing to the wellbeing of their country, even outside of Italy.

I found out that I am Italian, and I am proud to speak the same language of our nurses and doctors. I am a 21-year-old living in the 21st century, and I belong to a community that will embrace me as soon as possible. My projects will flourish again because they will be rich with this new awareness. There will come a time when we are going to feel those embraces again. They will carry another scent. They will taste better than any of our worldwide-known dishes.

We are not invincible, but we are not giving up.



Photo by Mark Neal on Pexels

Italy's Northern Regions call asylum-seeker doctors to fight against COVID-19, counteracting the recent Salvini Security Decrees.

By Caterina Fassina

The shortage of hospital staff to meet the increasing demand for health-care in Italy during the COVID-19 emergency forces Northern regions' governors to ignore current Italian immigration laws.

The Minister of the Interior, Luciana Lamorgese, was about to modify certain articles of the two Salvini Security Decrees of 2018 when COVID-19 broke out in Italy. Lamorgese intended to reduce the wait for asylum-seekers to become citizens, increase Italy's funds to secondary reception centers, and rehabilitate the humanitarian permit for victims of persecution and human trafficking. The health-care system crisis due to COVID-19 is fastening this process in the Italian sanitary system as doctor positions are opened to both Italians and non-Italians.



Bologna, March 19. An Italian flag hangs outside of a window with the slogan "Andra tutto bene: (Everything will be fine). On March 26, the positive cases were more than 10,000 in the region.

Photo from Wikimedia Commons.

MILAN- Not only retired and residents, but also asylum-seekers can answer to Northern Regions' bids for doctors, reversing the Italian Immigration law, especially the two Salvini Security Decrees. On March 17, the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and the regional governors signed an agreement to temporarily hire new medical staff to fight against the COVID-19 emergency. The decree Cure Italy grants hospitals one billion euros to employ medical personnel without discrimination based on nationality.

The World Health Organization reported last week more than 147,577 infection cases in Italy with more than 18,849 deaths and 30,455 recovered. More than 2,000 Italian nurses and doctors were infected as well. The doctors' trade union claimed 66 doctors have died.

On March 20, Lombardy and Piacenza Province published a call for bids on its websites. They asked for 300 volunteer doctors among the entire country regardless of their resident status. Within 12 hours, the applications were 1,500. Two days later, they exceeded 3,500.

"It shows great solidarity and the will to give a service to our community," said Giuseppe Conte on social media.

The Italian Immigration law usually forbids asylum-seekers to access health-care system's calls for bids until their Italian citizenship is granted, according to Foad Aodi, President of the Foreign Doctors Association (AMSI). It is the first time submissions for

health-care employees are open to asylum-seekers as well.

Salvini Security Decrees

Former Italian Minister of the Interior and leader of the Lega party Senator Matteo Salvini proposed two immigration decrees at the time he was still in office. The Salvini Security Decrees (also called Salvini Bills) were signed by the Italian government in 2018, forcing asylum-seekers to wait four years for an answer about their status. In the meantime, they have no certainty about being accepted as Italian citizens.

Already in June 2019, the Foreign Doctors Association had proposed asylum-seekers to obtain citizenship if they passed the exam. The association reported Italian hospitals did not have enough medical staff, while the number of asylum-seeker doctors exceeded 19,000 units.

Earlier that year, on Feb. 9, the Italian Minister of the Interior Luciana Lamorgese had announced on national television she was about to reduce the 4-year wait to two years— as it was set before the Security Decrees. Still, the modification shifted due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and Northern Regions' governors started hiring foreign health-care system employees to respond to the health-care crisis.

Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

The Geneva Convention of 1951, a document signed by 26 states, including Italy, distinguishes between a refugee and a migrant. A refugee is a displaced person who is unwilling or cannot go back to his/her/their country of origin due to persecutions and torture. The Convention calls displaced people "forced migrants," claiming they should become asylum-seekers until the hosting country grants them refugee status. Thus, refugees are former asylum-seekers. According to the Convention, a displaced person has the right not to be expelled or punished for the illegal entry in a country that respects human rights.

According to Father Alessandro Manaresi of the Jesuit Refugee Center, a reception system in Rome, there is little distinction between migrants and asylum-seekers. "In a way or another, they are all forced migrants," he said in an interview for this story.

An Amnesty International's report about the Italian Immigration system published on Jan. 20, compares some articles of the Security Decrees with the Geneva Convention, claiming the Italian decrees restrict access to asylum by giving the possibility of repatriating asylum-seekers and refugees to their motherlands.

If the government does not advocate for a modification, the number of illegal migrants will increase by 80,000 units by the end of 2020, according to Amnesty International. Expelling all asylum-seekers would take 90 years. "If the Security Decrees don't change, we will have 670,000 undocumented migrants by the end of 2020," said lawyer Marco Omizzolo during the presentation of Amnesty International's report on the consequences of Salvini's decrees.

Amnesty International reports the undeclared employment market absorbs and exploits migrants and asylum-seekers as underpaid laborers, even if they

can obtain a six-month to one-year special protection when they are victims of exploitation or reported labor exploitation.

The global NGO advocating against human trafficking and exploitation, OpenMigration, claims migrants are 10.5 percent of the whole Italian working population. About 34.7 percent of them are over-skilled for the jobs they perform as cleaners, peasants and domestic assistants.

"Salvini Bills [Security Decrees] worsen the reception system in Italy, generating urban polarization and poverty," said Omizzolo. "This situation [...] is causing an increase in the rate of victims of labor and criminal exploitation."

Maria Mazzini, a member of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), spoke about human trafficking and labor exploitation on Feb. 4, during a conference about Human Trafficking and Faith-Based Organizations at John Cabot University. "If reception and integration and inclusion processes are ensured in a continuous complementary fashion, [...] the risk of criminal exploitation can be significantly reduced." Mazzini said migrants without a permit are vulnerable and "easily exploitable" by criminal organizations.

The reception system before and after Salvini Security Decrees

Lamorgese said she also intended to rehabilitate the humanitarian permit and increase public financing to reception organizations.

Before the Security Decrees, migrants would be taken to first aid centers (CPSA) where they received the necessary sanitary screenings. They would be moved then to other centers (CDA and CARA) to be identified and to ask for international protection. Those who did not send the request would be transferred to other centers (CIE) and expelled within 90 days. After the Security Decrees signed in 2018, first aid centers diminished from 15 to 12.

Migrants who applied for the status of refugees would become asylum-seekers and be relocated to secondary reception systems (SPRAR) managed by public and private stakeholders and NGOs. These institutions would receive a three-year financial aid from the government to foster the integration of asylum-seekers through Italian language courses and work-oriented education. The SPRAR system also provided homes where volunteers and professionals could assist them continuously.

Italian local authorities and NGOs run such structures. Before the shutdown of Italy's funds, SPRAR structures gave work to 13,58 people, 60 percent of them being women, according to Open Migration.

The SPRAR system, now called SIPROIMI (Protection system for holders of international protection and alone underage foreigners), welcomes unaccompanied children and migrants whose application for asylum has already been approved. Before the Salvini Bills, the reception system could welcome both asylum-seekers and migrants with special protection. Today, only the latter can benefit from secondary infrastructures. The others "remain stuck in first aid centers." *Continued to following pages...*

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The reception system before and after Salvini Security Decrees

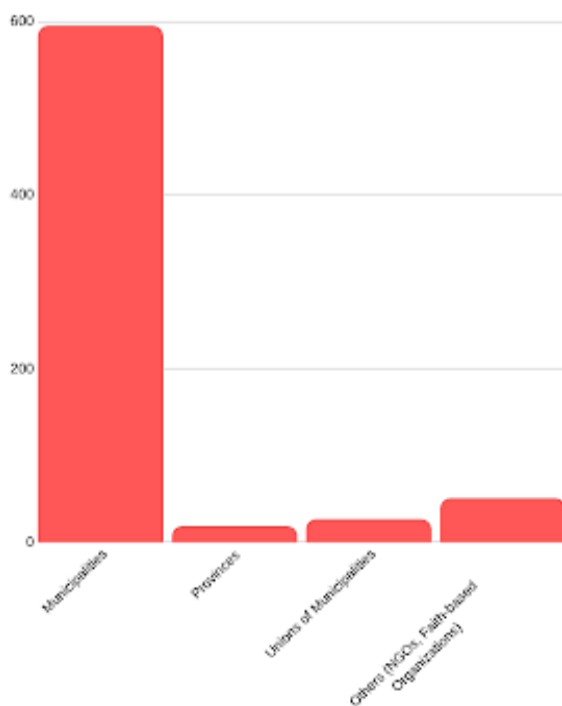
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SPRAR System Management in January 2020
Data from SPRAR Website.

The Italian Security Decrees state migrants must be taken to "hotspots" first, which can host up to 1,100 people. If migrants ask for international protection, they are moved to the first reception centers within 48 hours. If they do not, they are sent to another structure, where they wait for 180 days to be expelled. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) expressed concerns about the disempowerment of the SPRAR system of integration since 2018. With a decrease in the public funds for each migrant hosted, Italy's contribution for each asylum-seeker dropped from €35 per day to a range between €19 and €21. Lamorgese plans to increase the fund by €2 or €3 per migrant.

LaRepubblica reports sources near Lamorgese said they would redistribute migrants in dismissed buildings all over the Italian territory to prevent new COVID-19 focuses.

"Along with their regularization, we ask for a stronger commitment against the illegal recruitment of forced migrants and the black market in the agricultural sector," said Fabio Ciconte, president of Terra! Association.

"The amnesty for illegal migrants is necessary to guarantee equal medical treatment," said Ciconte. Urban ghettos are "a potential health bomb."

The corruption in reception centers

Baryali Waiz, an Afghan refugee studying at John Cabot University in Rome, said he is skeptical about the changes Lamorgese intends to bring.

"Migrants have to make themselves independent; otherwise, Italians will point their fingers," said Waiz. The SPRAR system should support women with children, according to Waiz, but many teenagers and young adults are put in suburban reception centers without the possibility of finding a job. Moreover, there are no professionals who can help them," said Waiz.

Waiz arrived in Italy from Kabul when he was 19 years old. Now, he is 27. Since he knows many languages, he was employed as a cultural mediator in Castelnuovo di Porto, a CARA structure. "There were two thousand people [there], but Salvini closed it," he said. Waiz explained that if "hosted people" came five minutes late, they would receive nothing to eat for the day. "A dog cannot eat the food they give them."

Waiz said the operators that brought him to speak with the asylum-seekers had tattooed swastikas on their arms. According to Waiz, Italy should directly manage the immigration system, instead of subcontracting. He also worked with Salvatore Buzzzi, currently in jail for Mafia corruption. Waiz said criminal organizations have now infiltrated the system as "migrants became more profitable than drug dealing."

Before COVID-19 made it impossible, Senator Salvini said his party was ready to organize street protests against Lamorgese's modifications. "NGOs are above the law. [...] The government is dominated by them," said the leader of Lega.

Since 2018, all types of reception structures have been disempowered, not only from an economic point of view, according to Amnesty International. Integration services have been defunded, and the minimum required number of cultural mediators, psychologists and doctors' weekly hours diminished.

Many victims of human trafficking and asylum-seekers arrive at the Jesuit Refugee Service daily. "They are so traumatized, they cannot think about the future," Father Manaresi said.

"If they are forced migrants, we are forced hosters," he continued, "They have to leave their countries and families because they are persecuted, and we have to welcome them." Manaresi said migrants do not want to invade Italy. "They do not even know where they are."

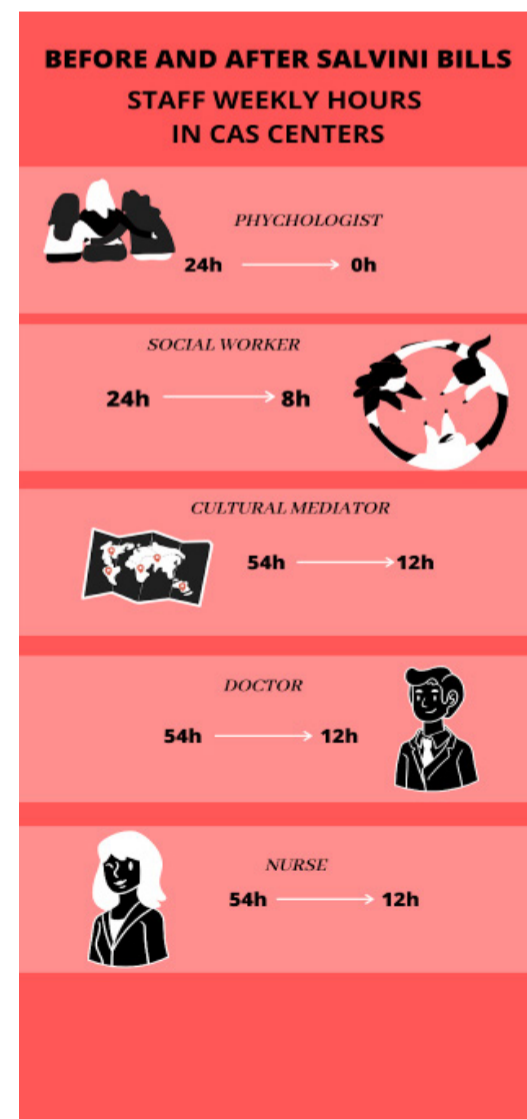
As Lamorgese's modifications shifted, the SPRAR system had limited funds to fight against the COVID-19 crisis. The SPRAR now SIPROIMI website states they are distributing multi-lingual flyers to prevent refugees from getting infected, as well as organizing online awareness campaigns for migrants.

On March 21, trade unions addressed a letter to Lamorgese asking for an amnesty for migrants in overcrowded reception centers and victims of labor exploitation. LaRepubblica reports sources near Lamorgese said they would redistribute migrants in dismissed buildings all over the Italian territory to prevent new COVID-19 focuses.

"Along with their regularization, we ask for a stronger commitment against the illegal recruitment of forced migrants and the black market in the agricultural sector," said Fabio Ciconte, president of Terra! Association.

"The amnesty for illegal migrants is necessary to guarantee equal medical treatment," said Ciconte. Urban ghettos are "a potential health bomb."

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Data from Amnesty International.

Continued...

Humanitarian permit and exploitation

On Feb. 9, Pope Francis also spoke about the necessity of fighting against human trafficking, which he defined as “a human plague.” He called institutions, associations and educational agencies “to heal this scourge - because it is truly a scourge - which exploits the weakest.”

The EU’s Convention on Action Against Human Trafficking in Human (GRETA) also stated the Security Decrees should be modified as they abolish the possibility for immigrants to ask for humanitarian protection status, putting them at risk to be trafficked.

Moreover, according to a United Nations panel of experts, limiting migrants’ ability to regularize their state “will increase their vulnerability to attacks and exploitation.” Experts said this situation would benefit traffickers and criminal groups.

Lamorgese said she intends to rehabilitate the humanitarian permit for refugees since the Security Decrees exclude the possibility for migrants to ask for such permission.

The current Italian Immigration law states migrants can ask only for a “special protection permit” in case they are persecuted and tortured in their motherlands. It can be revoked if the situation in their countries of origin changes, and it excludes the possibility of becoming political refugees.

Amnesty International reported the Salvini Bills lowered the number of people eligible for asylum, rather than the number of asylum-seekers as Lega members claim. Only a few categories of migrants can obtain this kind of permit, such as severely ill people and victims of persecution, and its recipients are forced to leave first reception centers without accessing secondary ones.

Human trafficking is related to migration flows, according to Pietro Sebastiani, Italian ambassador to the Holy See. “The fight against Human Trafficking is indeed a priority of Italy’s foreign and multi-lateral policy,” said Sebastiani during a conference at John Cabot University on Feb. 4. “Human rights are rapidly retreating.”

Sebastiani said that it is fundamental to strengthen collaboration, “especially with countries of origin and transit of migrants,” to prevent this practice. According to the Ambassador, “we need to correct our model of growth” as it is focused on economic profit and incapable of assuring decorous jobs and working conditions.

“We have created a global market, but not a global community sharing the objective of a peaceful and wealthy world,” said Mazzini during the same conference.

UNHCR claims that not all victims of trafficking are refugees, but some victims of trafficking might qualify for refugee status. UNHCR published a report to recognize human trafficking victims among refugees, providing seminars to local authorities responsible for the reception system.

According to the report published in January 2019 by GRETA, the known victims of human trafficking in Italy were only 1,772 in 2016 for the lack of a uniform identification system. Since no official statistics are provided, the report encouraged the Italian State to create a shared database of the trafficked victims.

“Only a small proportion of trafficked people have been identified,” said Mazzini referencing the United Nations’ research, which stated that 72 percent of victims are women and girls, and the percentage of child victims has more than doubled from 2004 to 2016. The majority of victims are female migrants coming, mostly from Nigeria. They are sexually exploited, according to Mazzini.

Information campaigns

GRETA suggests improving awareness campaigns against human trafficking in Italy and spreading them through mass media.

To this claim, Waiz said, “people don’t receive the correct information [...] youngsters know little or nothing at all about human trafficking and its consequences.”

According to Father Manaresi, the financial disempowerment and the negative media coverage received after the Salvini Bills made providing aid to migrants more difficult.

“In Germany, migrants and refugees live in effective infrastructures that provide top services. Still, they become invisible,” said Manaresi. “In Italy, we have a weaker system, but people can see them walking in the streets. That’s why our foundation is beside Piazza Venezia. Every day at 3 p.m. Italians see a queue of [about] 250 people waiting for their lunch.”

According to Manaresi, Italians need to be aware of migrants’ presence, but negative media attention can heighten the discrimination.

Education

The Jesuit Refugee Center in Rome organizes awareness campaigns and meetings with Italian schools. They have planned an educational program for Italian students. “We let refugees talk with young students because education is fundamental in this situation,” said Manaresi.

“We need to start from our schools,” since educating children from a young age is significant as “no one is born racist,” said Waiz. He said the Italian government needs to prevent children from growing up in a discriminatory system of thought.

Filmmaker Lia Beltrami, director of Wells of Hope, a documentary produced by Aurora Vision for the faith-based NGO, Talitha Kum, that advocates against human trafficking in the context of women’s sexual exploitation, “It’s easy to put a human trafficking victim in front of the camera, asking her to tell her terrible story. Yet, it does not give dignity to the person.”

Talitha Kum’s coordinator, Sister Gabriella, said Wells of Hope is a medium of prevention. Although the NGO cannot make provisions, they claimed to have helped 235,000 people so far.

Wells of Hope project coordinates a collective work with a multi-faith team in the Middle East. The group aims to reach out and support the victims, said Sister Marie Claude, coordinator of the Wells of Hope project.

“We aim to make hope coming back,” said Sister Gabriella.

Protezione Civile (the Italian civil protection) opened another application window for 500 nurses on March 19 and received more than 9,400 submissions. The number of asylum-seeker doctors and nurses who have engaged in the bids isn’t available at the moment. What is reported to date is that asylum-seekers, similarly to Italian residents and retired medical workers, are being offered temporary jobs. However, such a job offer does not grant the possibility for Italian citizenship.

Lamorgese has not made official statements about the future status of asylum-seekers temporarily working in healthcare to fight COVID-19. Due to the pandemic, logistical and operational difficulties have limited legal services and slowed down asylum application procedures.



Rome, February 21. Press conference for Talitha Kum’s documentary Wells of Hope. Photo courtesy of Caterina Fassina

creative voices

Forever

Blurred intentions,
evanescent thoughts,
confused voices
shouting quietly.

It won't
stop
and then

Silence.

Under the sun
on a Friday
afternoon,
my skin
is burning.

I can't
move,
and then

Silence.

The endless
motion of
a foot
tapping on
the wooden floor.

It won't
stop,
and then

Silence.

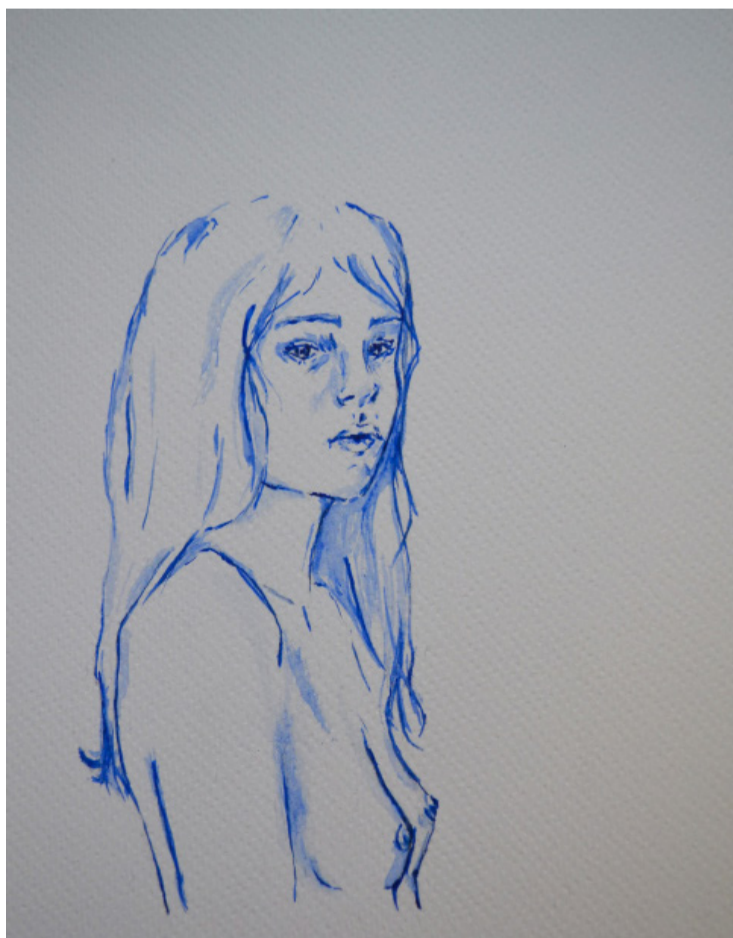
All around
an empty box,
dead roses
are starting
to bloom.

I'm still
here,
and then

Silence.

(Forever.
What is yours
belongs to you
Forever.)

Marilyn Ciabattoni



Drawing by Chryssi Soteriades

Film Photography by Gabrielle Small