

Silver Linings



Throughout these past few months of quarantine and ambiguity of what our future would look like, it was easy to focus on the negative energy that surrounded us. Each day was filled with concern about our health, livelihoods, and education. We have had to become accustomed to a new type of living. A new normal. One with more solitude, melancholy, and pain.

And as we slowly finish our time in quarantine, we look at this period with annoyance, and a craving to move on. But I would like to consider the good that has occurred in these past few months. I would like to unveil the positive change that happened throughout our time in quarantine.

In my own life, I have had conflicting and surprising emotions about the past months. On one hand, I no longer got to see my friends. I had to continue my education through my computer screen. I wasn't able to leave my own house. And while there were days of frustration, of sadness, of anger, I found a lot of peace within this time.

I no longer had to face grueling social anxiety each day when I went to school; whether it was because I had to see certain people or I was worried about what they would think about me. I was finally able to take control of my schedule and organize when I wanted to do schoolwork, but also what I should prioritize. I could take time with the

assignments that used to be timed and difficult for me to successfully complete. I felt an enormous weight lifted off of my shoulders.

There were also social benefits that I found during quarantine as I was able to reconnect with past friends and talk to those who live in different time zones. I've gotten the chance to spend time with the people that I love and care about.

Furthermore, I've reunited with the hobbies that I love to do but didn't have time for during the first semester of this past school year. I've delved into the world of painting and imagination. I liked to wake up early and begin to sketch before the day began. I got to hear birds beginning to sing, welcoming me to my desk. It seemed to me that their songs were even more vibrant than before. Or maybe it was the first time that I had noticed their flawless melodies.

Now that I think about it, my appreciation for nature has grown exponentially. Because of this, I have paid much more attention to wildlife during quarantine. I found a general trend; as human activity decreased, the wildlife returned. Wandering boars can be found in Barcelona. Baby turtles in Brazil are thriving while they're unbothered by beachgoers. Multitudes of bears have been seen wandering around Yosemite.



This photo was taken in Paris, France about three years ago and serves as a perfect visual of a silver lining. — Julia Krepsztul Photo.

From an international perspective, a decrease in pollution can be seen in Venice's canals. Satellite images show the difference in the water within the Venetian canals from just a year ago. Murkiness and obscurity turned into clarity in a shade of blue. Although this is due to the sediment within the canals finally settling as no boats or gondolas have been traveling, people have commented on the improving air quality due to the lack of engines running; a pattern that can be seen throughout the world.

Our environment has experienced a period of relief over the past months, reaping new benefits for the human race. Due to our inability to use transportation that contributes to air pollution, scientists have noticed the impressive decrease in air pollutants. According to the American Geophysical Union, "nitrogen dioxide pollution over northern China, Western Europe and the U.S. decreased by as much as 60 percent in early 2020 as

compared to the same time last year” .

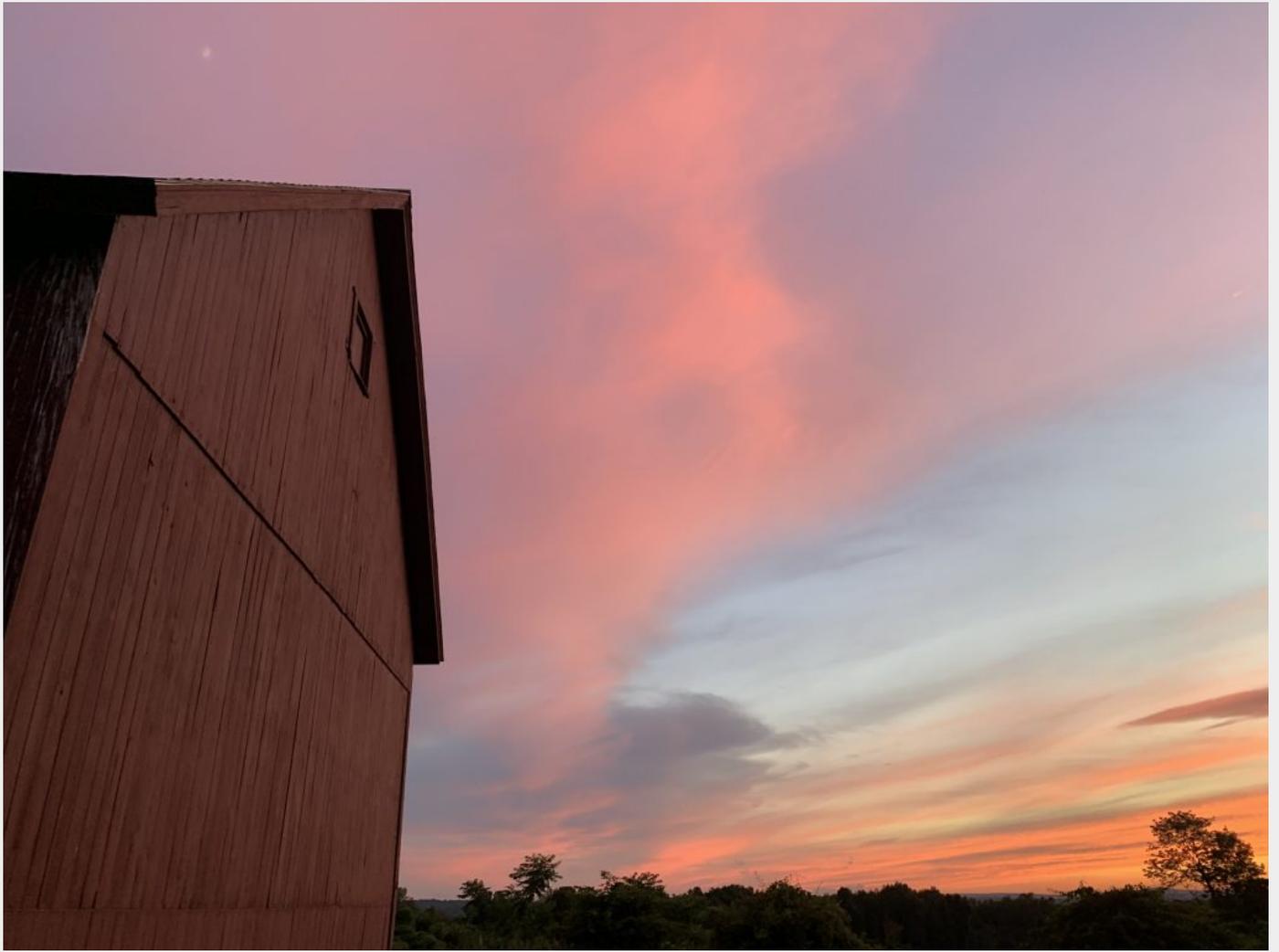
As the AGU continues to explain, nitrogen dioxide is harmful to our lungs and is produced from “vehicles, power plants, and industrial activities.” It’s important to note that, with this decrease, there has been an increase in surface ozone in China.

Air quality has been widely seen as improved since the pandemic began due to our inability to leave our homes. And although these changes are seen as temporary because our quarantine is coming to an end, it shows a promising future that can and should occur when we apply stricter laws and regulations about air pollution. This can be said of the other positive changes that we have experienced during quarantine as well.

The purpose of this article has not been in any way to diminish the horrifying and devastating effects of COVID-19, but to shed light on the positive changes that have occurred within this time. I acknowledge that my experience during quarantine has not been the same as everyone else’s.

That being said I am a strong believer in our unique ability to see the good in dark times such as these. And we should continue to do so. It can bring us some hope, some motivation for the future.

A bright future.









Lonetown Farm Museum in Redding, Conn.: A wonderful place to watch sunsets and explore nature. — Julia Krepsztul Photos