

# Signs of the Times

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Tattoo Heartland, the tattoo parlor that I had spent last semester working with. The owners of the business were always more than friendly and willing to accommodate me and my projects. The shop now stands empty and dark due to state-wide closures of non-essential businesses.



We made a two-day trip to Bowling Green and back, packing most of my personal possessions in a single night and making the 1,100 round-trip in less than 36 hours.



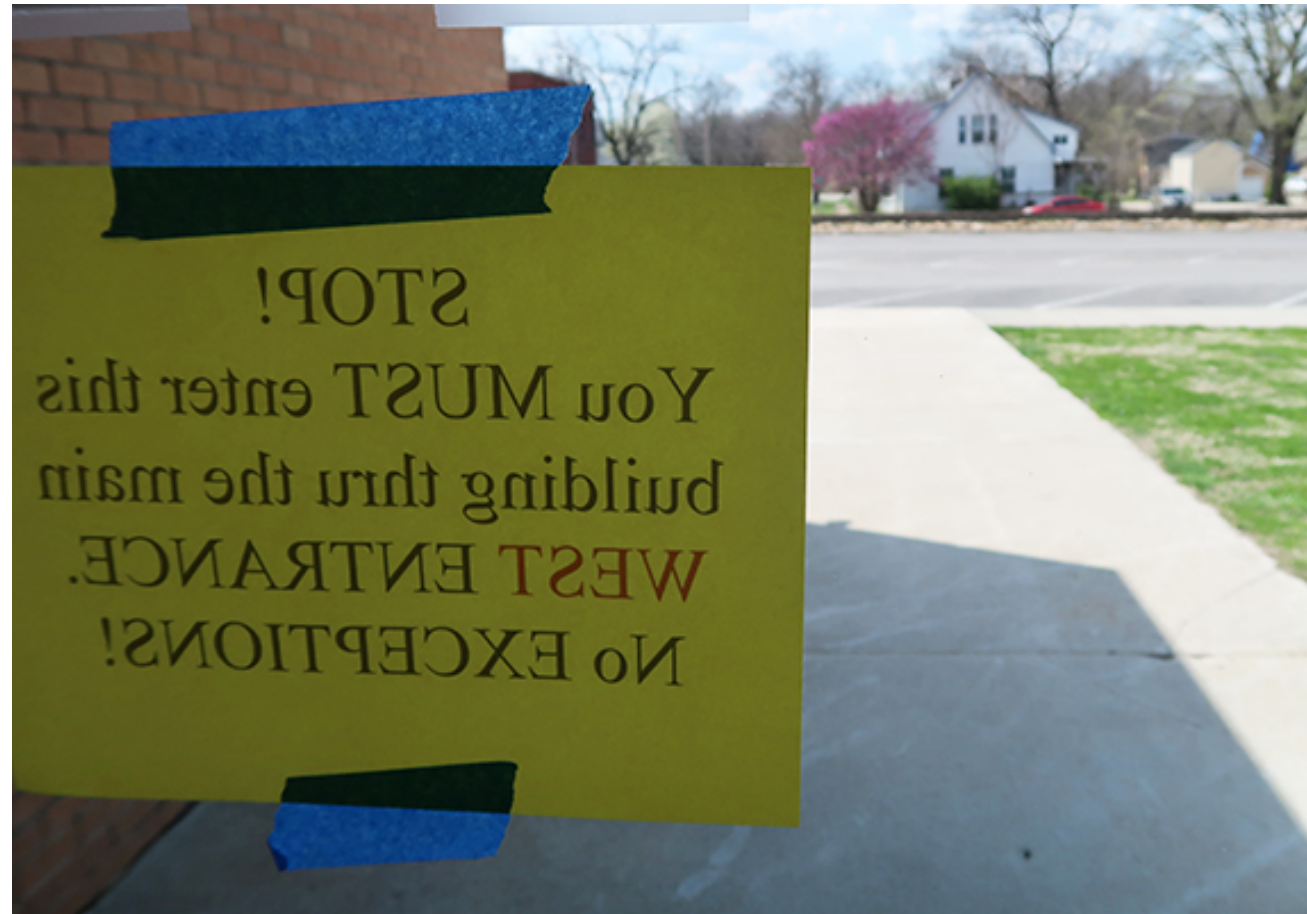
My family no longer touches anything in public without a Clorox wipe in between our skin and the object. Before we can even touch the car to get back in, we have to use hand sanitizer.



The rumor mill has always been an essential part of rural towns. Small restaurants are where old, retired farmers gather and spend the day drinking coffee and solving the world's problems. These shrines dedicated to the town gossip stand empty these days.



My mother and I got the news that our final semesters of classes were cancelled at almost the exact same time. Her final year of teaching was over, and my final semester of graduate school was yanked out from under my feet. We have spent years working towards our final semesters. We have dedicated blood, sweat, tears, and years of our lives, only to leave us twisting and spinning in the wind.



Students lockers have been systematically inventoried and emptied. The floor of the gymnasium acting as a temporarily holding location, each locker's contents in the designated area.



We had spent the day the best we could, working on cars and trucks that had spent years in disrepair. Breathing new life into vehicles that had once been hot rods that tore down roads while rattling windows in their panes.





We don't trust many people these days. We make trips to town for the essentials and watch the population brazenly touch surfaces and immediately touch their faces in some way. The only person that we trust to not take any undue risks is the only person I've seen in the past week, apart from my immediate family.



The rules have changed. The world is different now, and we have to adjust to it. We can no longer afford to do anything but maintain constant vigilance in the face of this health crisis.



Whisky, tobacco, and physical distancing. That's what it boils down to these days as we endeavor to keep each other and our families safe. Bad habits starting, good habits ending, we do what we can to stay sane during these strange times.



These days, the world is quieter. Traffic has died down, people stay in their homes, and all we can do is watch as it happens. These days, we are no longer in control. We are just along for the ride.

