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- U.S, India and Brazil remain the three most affected countries worldwide.

### February 2021<sup>9</sup>

- Israel has vaccinated the highest percentage of its population (22.03%).
- Covax, a global program with the aim of ensuring equal access to COVID-19, has allotted millions of Astra-Zeneca doses to be delivered to African countries by the end of the month. As the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria stands to receive 16 million doses; while Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo will receive 9 and 7 million doses respectively.

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## 2020 AND THE PANDEMIC, A PERSONAL MEMOIR

**Omolewa Adedipe - Clinical III**

**T**he novel coronavirus was identified after several Nobody knew just how much COVID would change our lives, and although it looks like the worst is over and the world is beginning to recover, I believe we all are yet to realize just how much our lives have changed.

My awareness of COVID as a threat was insidious, it started initially as the international news making rounds on Twitter, a faraway reality that wasn't particularly urgent in any of our minds. I remember sneezing at clinic and one of our consultants asking me if I had been to China lately, everyone laughed. At the time, the southwest was more concerned about the Lassa fever epidemic, COVID wasn't an issue -or so we thought.

The first interruption to our academic year came at the end of February 2020 when consultants went on a strike action to protest the NUC's ridiculous requirements for PhDs before they could teach medical students. This seemed reasonable enough as the strike was for a good cause and a

2-week break from school was a very welcome idea. Little did I or anyone else for that matter, know that we would be home for an entire year.

While discussing one of the poems in his collection, Clinical Blues, at a book reading several years ago, Dr. Dami Ajayi spoke of the depression you experience towards the end of med school, the tiredness from a long journey and the uncertainty about the future that plagues your mind. This was, and still very much is, my situation.

Med school wasn't a conscious choice, but it wasn't forced on me either. I was an inquisitive and impressionable girl, and too restless to decide what I wanted to do, many things caught my fancy for varying lengths of time.

When my parents suggested medicine, I didn't object, and since everybody told me I was intelligent enough to study medicine and almost all the awesome adults in my life went to OAU, I let them sign me up for medicine at OAU. 2020 was my 8th year in med school, and I was still as indifferent -maybe even more so- about medicine as I was when I

started out. I felt old, tired and ready to leave, and just as I arrived at what was supposed to be the final leg, the pandemic struck.

It was no small inconvenience.

At first, it seemed like a good idea to keep studying, as everyone expected that the lockdown would be lifted soon, or that an exception would be made for final year med students to return to school, but this wasn't happening so I soon forgot about books.

Lockdown with my family was a weird experience. My family was quite compliant to the NCDC's orders, so we stayed at home, fully. It was the first time everybody would be home, with nowhere to go at all. While being locked down together afforded me quality time with my family, it was also draining. Every day was identical, with no schedule and no meaning.

I attempted to learn a few new skills and take jobs, but I couldn't put my heart into anything because my unfinished business with school was hanging over my head like a dark cloud. There was no end in sight to our stay at home, it wasn't a holiday with a definite resumption date, they could ask us to resume at any time; so, I didn't have anything to work with, I couldn't make plans, couldn't apply for anything that was long-term, because I wasn't sure of anything. My personal frustrations paled in comparison to what was going on with the rest of the world though, and it simply felt unreasonable to complain that I was losing time when several other people were losing their lives.

The Nigerian society slowly weaned herself off the lockdown, people started going out like normal, churches resumed gatherings and some people went back to work, but we were still stuck at home, schools were not yet allowed to reopen.

This was particularly frustrating for me, because staying home no longer protected us from getting COVID, we were already exposed in our communities, so there really was no point to keeping the schools closed.

The #ENDSARS protest was a remarkable highlight of this period for me. Though short-lived and ill-fated, it was a remarkable moment in Nigeria's history that showed just how incredibly resilient and resourceful young Nigerians are. Sadly, it also showed how Nigeria has no problem at all killing her young. October came with an overwhelming sense of injustice and insecurity that I still find hard to shake off.

School finally resumed in February, 2021 and to save lost time, we picked up where we left off, which for me was barely 2 weeks to Internal Medicine End of Posting Exams. It was at this point that I began to realize just how much staying so long at home had affected me. I found it hard to study, I had

quite literally forgotten how to, and my attention span was painfully short. I had to revise topics that I was taught over a year ago and that was incredibly hard.

Medscape updated my profile to M.D sometime back in 2020. This was not surprising because I most likely filled in 2020 as my expected year of graduation when signing up for my med student account, but it was hilarious when I received an email from them in my promotions inbox referring to me as Dr. Adedipe.

At the end of 2019, everyone referred to 2020 as the start of a new decade. I did not agree.

2020 came and sadly proved me right. That was no way to start a new decade. It was a horrible year through and through, filled with so many losses and deaths, and so much despair. 2020 was a layover, a stop between flights, the interruption that no one speaks of.

2021 is the year I finally graduate med school, the beginning of the rest of my life.

It's the start of a new decade, the start of something new.