



Convener's Note: Media Rise's Quarantined Across Borders Collection

By Srividya "Srivi" Ramasubramanian

Co-Founder and Executive Director, Media Rise

As we conclude the Quarantined Across Borders (QAB) blog series, I wanted to share my sincere gratitude on behalf of Media Rise to everyone who has made this initiative possible.

As an immigrant Indian-American, QAB is not just a professional project but a deeply personal one. This week, COVID-19 cases are on the rise in my hometown of Chennai and in Texas. Behind every statistic is a real human being— a person with a life full of stories, feelings, relationships, inspirations, and dreams.

At Media Rise, as a global collective focused on elevating media for social good, we believe in the power of media, storytelling, art, and design to accelerate social impact. Media Rise is a shared collaborative space for artists, educators, storytellers, and activists. We have convened 3,000+ participants through 60+ events across four countries so far.

Quarantined Across Borders is our first entirely virtual multimedia online initiative. 80+ authors participated in this initiative from 30+ countries. Our goal with QAB was to create a wide platform for a broad range of diverse voices to share their quarantine stories in a timely fashion, especially from/about borderland, immigrant, and diasporic communities.

All entries were submitted by May 15, 2020. Every day in June, we published three stories. We started at the end of Asian/Pacific heritage month and the beginning of Pride Month. We witnessed a global uprising as part of the #BlackLivesMatter movement this month as the stories were published.

The QAB collection includes poems, critical essays, dialogues, and commentaries. A range of topics was covered: community, compassion, connections, family, fears, food, faith, loss, worries, love, politics, inequalities, trauma, hope, and inspiration. We received submissions from 30+ countries: from Afghanistan to Australia, Brunei to Bosnia, China to Colombia, Greece to Germany, India to Iran, Ivory Coast to Indonesia, Kazakhstan to Kuala Lumpur, Pakistan to Philippines, Syria to Singapore, Taiwan to Thailand, and more.

QAB is a narrative quilt of mismatched textures that hangs together to tell us a bigger story. It is a diasporic diary, a glimpse into our souls, and a poetic salve. It is an archive

of collective memory, a collage of cultural snapshots, and a shared space for sensemaking during these difficult times.

As the convener of the QAB collection, I saw my role as a space-maker, connector, and community-builder. I made a conscious decision to step away from my role as editor. An editor's job is to help writers refine their pieces for clarity and accuracy before publication in a professional outlet. I wanted the entries to be "raw"—unpolished and unedited—to reflect the uncertainties, confusions, and disruptions that COVID-19 has brought with it.

If the quarantine has taught me anything, it is that we need to extend more grace and kindness to one another. I request your generosity of spirit as you engage with these entries. Many of the contributors to this collection are first-time authors. They come from several walks of life -- youth, K-12 educators, physicians, homemakers, journalists, scholars. Even among previously published authors, several experimented with new styles and formats such as first-person accounts, which are different from journalistic writing or scholarly publications. Given the short deadlines, limited energies, competing priorities, and increased care labor, these writers somehow found the time to put their pieces together amid disease, death, and disaster around them.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my terrific team: Anthony R. Ramirez, Olivia Osteen, and Miranda Calderon for their editorial, creative, and production assistance.

Special thanks to the Melbern Glasscock Center for Humanities and the Texas A&M digital librarians for all their support. Most of all, I thank all the authors for trusting us with their contributions and to all our readers, especially those in the online Media Rise Community group, for their support and encouragement for this project.

In terms of next steps, we will be inviting selected authors to refine, revisit, and resubmit their entries for the special online forum of the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, which will be co-edited by me with Dr. Aisha Durham and Dr. Joelle Cruz.

We are happy to share that the collection has been viewed more than 6,800 times as of June 26, 2020. We invite you to please visit www.mediarisnow.org/qab to read the stories. Please also follow us @mediarisnow on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, where you can share your feedback on individual stories with authors.

As we continue to live through this global pandemic, I hope these stories bring us strength, hope, and healing. I hope they inspire us to work collectively toward a more just, equitable, healthy, and humane world. Thank you again for your support of this initiative.

Be well. Rise with us.

