



Families moving out of the Letts-Anderson Quadrangle at American University

# Ms. Rona Fails American University College Students

COVID-19, Coronavirus, or most popularly known amongst many social media platforms as “Ms. Rona”, has wasted no time negatively impacting the lives of college students at American University. Ever since this deadly virus has hit the U.S by storm, many Black individuals have been affected at more disproportionate rates than their white counterparts. Statistics show that Black Americans are being hit hardest by the virus for reasons ranging from poverty and related health conditions to poor access to health services to concentration in occupations most exposed to the virus. Research shows

that Black people in the U.S hold more essential jobs, which makes them prone to exposure for the virus. “My father is an essential worker so his life hasn't stopped for him,” says American University Sophomore Tamir Harper”. On March 11, 2020, American University along with many other colleges and universities around the country announced that they would be moving classes online, in an attempt to condense the spread of COVID 19 around campus. At that time, AU students were enjoying their time on spring break. Some were at their respective homes whereas others were soaking up the sun on Miami Beach and other tropical destinations.

“I was on Miami Beach, with my friends, meeting other college students from around the country as well, and my phone was constantly blowing up,” said an American University Sophomore. “It seemed like there was a new update every day.”



Two cars with belongings of students moving out because of COVID-19

American University originally announced that classes would be held online for 3 weeks until April 6th. With that, many students had planned to return to campus and conduct classes online from the comfort of their dorms, whereas others had planned on staying at home for three weeks. When it was officially announced that in person classes were then canceled until the end of the school year, students from around the country and the world had to pack up their things in the short span of a week. Many students had to face the stress of moving out, packing up their dorm rooms, finding a storage unit, and traveling to and from the District of Columbia. Some international students were at a loss for how they were going to do so in such a limited amount of time. Sophomore Kobe Potter, who currently resides on the United States Virgin Island of St. Thomas, expressed how she wasn't sure how she was going to pack up all her stuff in under a week and travel back to the island. “ It is not like I could drive, I live overseas so I have to fly,” says Kobe Potter “My sister is also in the same boat and has to leave AU too”

Despite this hectic move out process, certain companies such as Frontline Airlines, Enterprise Car Rental Company, and UHAL granted students free flights, storage, and car services. Although this was the case, it was hard for many students to obtain and benefit from these services. For example, Frontier Airlines did not travel to metropolitan areas such as New York City and Atlanta, areas where a lot of Black students reside. This lack of opportunity put Black college students at a disadvantage when moving out, especially those who had to do so alone. Many parents were not able to take off work, leaving the move out process in the hand of the student.

Some students whose “homes” were not necessarily an option for them to stay at during this online transition were granted emergency housing, but many students were denied. Many of those Denied were Black students who do not live in areas that would be ideal for them to complete their classwork. American University Student Mulan Burgess, gave insight on this matter. Mulan, who resides in Brooklyn, New York lost his mother last year and is currently living alone. “Staying on campus was my only option”. Mulan is currently staying in one of the residence halls on AU’s campus and waiting for further instruction on how to move out.

Another major concern for students is not being able to hold on to their on-campus jobs. Many students who relied on a bi-weekly check or a stipend from the University are unable to do so because their jobs have been terminated. “It’s annoying because I am going to be broke” seemed to be the common consensus among AU students. “I pay most of my bills so not having an income is not going to be ideal,” says an anonymous student. Many parents of students have either been laid off or furloughed. A few are employed in essential work, but for many, an on-campus job is the only source of income coming into their homes. A few weeks after the “Big Move”, the President Trump signed the The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (C.A.R.E.S) Act, which allocated 2 trillion dollars in an effort to provide economic

relief to small business and individuals who have been impacted by Covid-19. The act allowed for 1200 stimulus checks to be distributed to individuals who make an adjusted gross income of 75,000 dollars or less. It did not include however, students who are claimed as dependents on their parents taxes. A new act has been announced called The C.A.R.E.S ACT Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. According to the office of Post-secondary education, “The CARES Act Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund-IHE/ Student Aid provides funding to institutions to provide emergency financial aid grants to students whose lives have been disrupted, many of whom are facing financial challenges and struggling to make ends meet. Students cannot apply for assistance directly from the U.S. Department of Education but should contact their institutions for further information and guidance. Institutions have the responsibility of determining how grants will be distributed to students, how the amount of each student grant is calculated, and the development of any instructions or directions that are provided to students about the grant.”

Despite this, many students are forced to rely on government money to survive through this pandemic. The question now becomes, will American University students continue their education in the fall on campus or at home? And what will that look like for students who do not have ideal home situations?

## References

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