

## *Call Back If You Can Not Breathe*



*Leon, Nicaragua, 2016-2018  
Denise worked as an English Teacher Trainer in the United States Peace Corps after retiring from the NJ Attorney General's Office. She recently recovered from COVID-19 and shares her experience on social media at AuthorDeniseHollingsworth.*

As I laid on the sofa under my comfy blanket recently, I saw dust simply everywhere: the television screen, the floor, the corners, but my desire was only to heal, not to clean. Not to write, just heal.

Before the coronavirus took me on a five-week journey, I was simply productive enough to get by. I knew that I would be quarantined inside the dusty house and that what I did not do today, I could do tomorrow. My usual sense of time and urgency simply had lost its significance as I wondered what new protective restriction may be announced. Somehow my work just did not seem quite as compelling as the surging infection and death rates, particularly in the Black community, due to that raging bull of a virus.

It had not crossed my mind that I would be an early statistic in our COVID-19 pandemic. After I fell ill, I wished I had worked harder and focused less on infection rates. I thought about time wasted during quarantine before I fell ill, all the projects I could have completed-beyond just dusting. But remember I thought the world had hit an indefinite pause button. And I just went with it.

Then suddenly I simply could not find the energy to complete any project and worst yet, I had no interest. To the extent the world was moving, I was not even exerting even the lowest level of energy to keep up. Or so it seemed.

In truth, my energy had been redirected to save my life. The battle was unseen but formidable. My immune system was engaged in full warfare and I needed to be still while it waged its war. I had a debilitating headache for weeks, a painful chest, and no desire to eat. And, my cough was “concerning”. My primary care physician told me to call back if I could not breathe. I had thanked him politely, hung up and got busy. I had no intention of making that call.

Ultimately, the virus was defeated after weeks of aggressive home remedies and plenty of rest and water.\* My flag of health now waves high and I am thanking God for the wonders of healing and his mercy. All who fall prey do not heal, however. For those, we pray for their families as they grieve their loss.

I am happy to say that I gladly dust now, and I remind myself that the present is truly a gift.

Councilwoman Denise Hollingsworth, Burlington, NJ

\*My treatment regimen can be found on social media AuthorDenisehollingsworth.