

Essay by Stephen Mullally

The Complications of Death

Over the past year many things have changed, the President, the government and the very way we live. However, these important new changes have made me look back on the past. My grandma recently passed away and it has made me realize just how inconceivable mass death is to our feeble human minds. Death is no new thing to humans as a species, however we have started to gloss over and dim down the sharp feeling death brings.

We hear of shootings and read about wars, but we don't hear about the people themselves, the friends and the families of those who have passed on. We have started to distinguish them as numbers, as statistics to help bring the unimaginable back down to our understanding. This is a helpful little trick but it has caused us to forget how far the ripples of death can travel. We forget that "eleven dead" also means eleven families mourning, eleven friend groups left to grieve and thousands of people who have greeted, helped or talked to those eleven people.

Now try and imagine that scenario but with more than 20 million people. It seems that however hard we try, the reality is just beyond our grasp. We have thought about what it will be like when we lose a loved one and how we will deal with that loss but speaking from a personal standpoint it is nothing like what we expect.

As we have trudged through this seemingly never ending pandemic it's so hard for us to understand the massive impact it has had on so many people. However like the rest of these incidents we have transformed these losses into numbers. Stripping the tragedy of its human aspect and straining out the painful feelings so that we are left with a cold, man-made creation. We have used this creation to limit the ripples in the water so that it doesn't reach across the globe to someone who never knew they passed on.

This creation has limited our understanding and ability to feel compassion to those who have lost a loved one. It has built a cold sense of unawareness around reading headlines and textbooks about who died and how many this time. I hope as we move forward more people can understand that human life is something that cannot just disappear, instead it is something that will pull on the hearts of everyone around them as they fade from the life they have lived.