My name: Fernando Estrada
My town: Melbourne

My Covid19 story

I came to Australia in 2012 to do my PhD. I wanted to come to Australia because I was openly gay in Mexico and there was a lot of stigma. I wanted to see what it was like to have a gay community around me. I also chose Australia because I saw Julia Gillard's speech on misogyny to Tony Abbott and I thought Australian women must be very strong. So, I said oh my goodness, I am going to study in Australia.

I'm an International Student. Because of Covid I wasn't able to go to Uni. I wasn't able to see my peers or my supervisors. Many of the other International Students flew home. All of a sudden that life that was very important to me stopped. The income from the work we had at Uni as well also stopped. There was no support for rent or electricity – none of that, because I am an International Student. I was able to negotiate with the real estate agent to suspend the first month rent. It was very difficult. So, I got work cleaning shelves at a supermarket. It was a blessing because I had income again. The supermarket was very close, so I didn't have to pay for transport.

One of my friends lost both her parents. I was close to them. I couldn't go to their funerals. That broke my heart. I couldn't express what I wanted to express.

Covid made me more aware of my friendships and the way that I relate to my friends and to myself. It helped me to be more aware of the importance of being together with other people. Being present with friends – face to face, not just on the phone or zoom. It also made me appreciate my friends.

Covid19 also made me conscious about my health. I realise I was overweight, and I needed to think about my health. I was being unkind to my body.

I was living in a small place and it was very reclusive. I didn't have a social life. I have always kept busy – and then it was very quiet. I had to embrace what I was feeling. I was scared about Coronavirus. I felt overwhelmed. I had to hold the uncertainty.

My friends in Mexico tell me that the Mexican Government can't give anyone financial support, so everyone keeps working and the numbers of Coronavirus keep going up. There are sanitisers everywhere, but a lot of people don't wear masks. I think that is very scary. Really very scary.

My act of Intersectional Kindness

One day I was in tears, really in tears. A friend invited me to a zoom with other friends. He shared his screen with us, so we could watch Netflix. They all checked in to see how we were doing, and I really started to cry. My friend offered to catch up with me and fortunately he was in the 5km travel limit. When we caught up we cooked, and I spent a lovely time and it helped to ease my anxiety.

He was able to sense that I was in a lot of stress and it moved him to help. He didn't feel he was doing anything, and he wanted to do something more for me, because I am single. That is very kind.