

Lockdown diaries: Amy, unethically evicted by her landlord during quarantine

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Amy's landlord made the decision to terminate their rental agreement at the end of February, giving Amy a month to find a new abode. When the state of emergency was declared and attending apartment viewings was rendered unfeasible, Amy's landlord aggressively insisted that these unprecedented circumstances changed nothing and that she had to leave by April 1. Luckily Amy's co-worker, who's staying with friends, has offered Amy her flat to live in during quarantine, for as long as she needs.

Amy is a California native who has been living in Madrid for 3.5 years as a teaching assistant and also sings in a Gospel Choir in her spare time. Here's her lockdown diary.

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

I was running through life "a cien" as they say. Apart from work, private classes, and some other activities I'm involved in, my landlady had just given me 30 days notice that my

rental contract was ending on April 1, so I was looking online and visiting rooms all over Madrid. My anxiety level was really high but I don't think I even realized how elevated it was. Today, after 2 weeks of being forced to stay at home, sit still and live less hectic of a life, I'm so grateful because I couldn't have continued at that rate much longer.

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

Once the state of alarm was declared in Spain, it became nearly impossible to go out and look for flats. In spite of this, my landlady became increasingly insistent that my stay there would not be extended, which meant staying in my flat was turning into an emotionally exhausting and anxious experience. When sharing this with friends and family both here in Madrid and other parts of the world, I was flooded with words of support, anger on my behalf, offers to solicit legal advice, advice on how to act going forward, and plenty of sympathies.

However, the greatest act of kindness I've received during this time of need has been a co-worker of mine who, as she is staying with friends during the quarantine and in recognizing that it was essential that I get out of my flat, offered me her house to stay in as long as I need, a much needed and invaluable respite.

How are you coping?

I've been talking with friends and family both locally and

abroad who I wouldn't normally have time to in my "pre-lockdown" life. In particular, a friend of mine created a group on the video chat app Marco Polo which helps me to fill the time and feel connected with people who are on the other side of the world.

Apart from that, I've been doing virtual dance and workout classes, limiting the amount of TV I watch and stretching to pass the time. Another thing that has been so critical in coping has been taking time to say or list the things I am grateful for – a grateful heart is a satisfied one.

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

Now that I've successfully moved out of my previous flat and am in more of a mentally safe space, I'd like to take time to process this whole experience – think about it, cry about it, be angry about it, accept it, or whatever.

I'm lucky because I haven't lost my job and am in a safe place to pass the quarantine so I want to take advantage of this time to care for myself and my mental health. I'm also wanting to get back to studying C1 level Spanish and who knows, perhaps even be able to do the splits!

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

This pandemic has come in a moment when few schools are ready and properly equipped to teach online. Many aren't which means some language assistants churning out videos, online resources, games, projects, and activities for their students while there are others like me whose schools are still fighting an uphill battle in figuring out this whole online learning thing, much less communicating on how to incorporate their eager language assistants into it. Then, of course, there are people who have gone home and unexpectedly lost their jobs here.

This is an unprecedented time in education and we are on just as steep of a learning curve as our students.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

That day still seems somewhat far off. I'll probably go for a walk or maybe even a run in the park, hopefully with friends! Just before the lockdown, I was getting really into running as a way to manage anxiety but when this finishes, the thing that I might be most yearning for is to see people in the flesh. Maybe we'll skip the run and just have a good-old picnic to catch up and enjoy being in each other's physical presence.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

Be gracious with others. People are very anxious for numerous reasons right now – they don't know how they'll make ends

meet. Or they or someone they love is in a high-risk group. We don't know the lives and hearts of the people we interact with at the pharmacy, grocery store, or even those we share a house with; but, we can be gracious and willing to retract justifiable blame, anger or frustration under normal circumstances given that what we are living through is clearly not normal.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in a similar situation?

I was in quarantine with my landlady's daughter and her boyfriend (who I was never really consulted on about him joining us during confinement). They stuck to a pretty set teleworking and work-out schedule. My roommate's boyfriend was silent on all of what was going on regarding my pending eviction but my roommate was notably concerned that I wasn't looking (or rather, couldn't look) for places and would be unable to move out by April 1.

Now, however, I'm alone in my friend's apartment. It is the first time in my life that I've lived alone so I'm interested to see how it goes.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

I would probably thank them for not cutting my job and those of the many language assistants who chose to stay in a foreign country amidst a global pandemic because their prospects here

are better than what would have been if they went home. In that vein, I'd tell them to consider the lives of people whose studies and practicums have been interrupted through all of this and make reasonable and doable provisions for them to be able to complete what they need to.

I'd ask the government to be creative, to listen to what educators and students need when making decisions about how to proceed, and be open to new and formerly unconventional ways of getting things done.

What's going on in your hometown? Would you like to send them a message?

From what I've heard and seen, my hometown is about a week behind Madrid in terms of ordering people to shelter in place and mandating that businesses shut down. My message to them would be to stick with it. Now is not the time to bury your head in the sand or invent conspiracy theories as excuses for not complying.

- If you or someone you know is being evicted in Madrid right now, you can contact the [Sindicato de Inquilinos](#) (Madrid tenants' union)
- Also read this article by Madrid No Frills which explains more: [Madrid's anti-eviction warriors](#)

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

If you'd like to get involved and share a compelling story

from this ongoing chapter of history, reach out to Daphne Binioris (daphne@veracontent.com) and Daniel Catalan (a96039@aup.edu)