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## Home

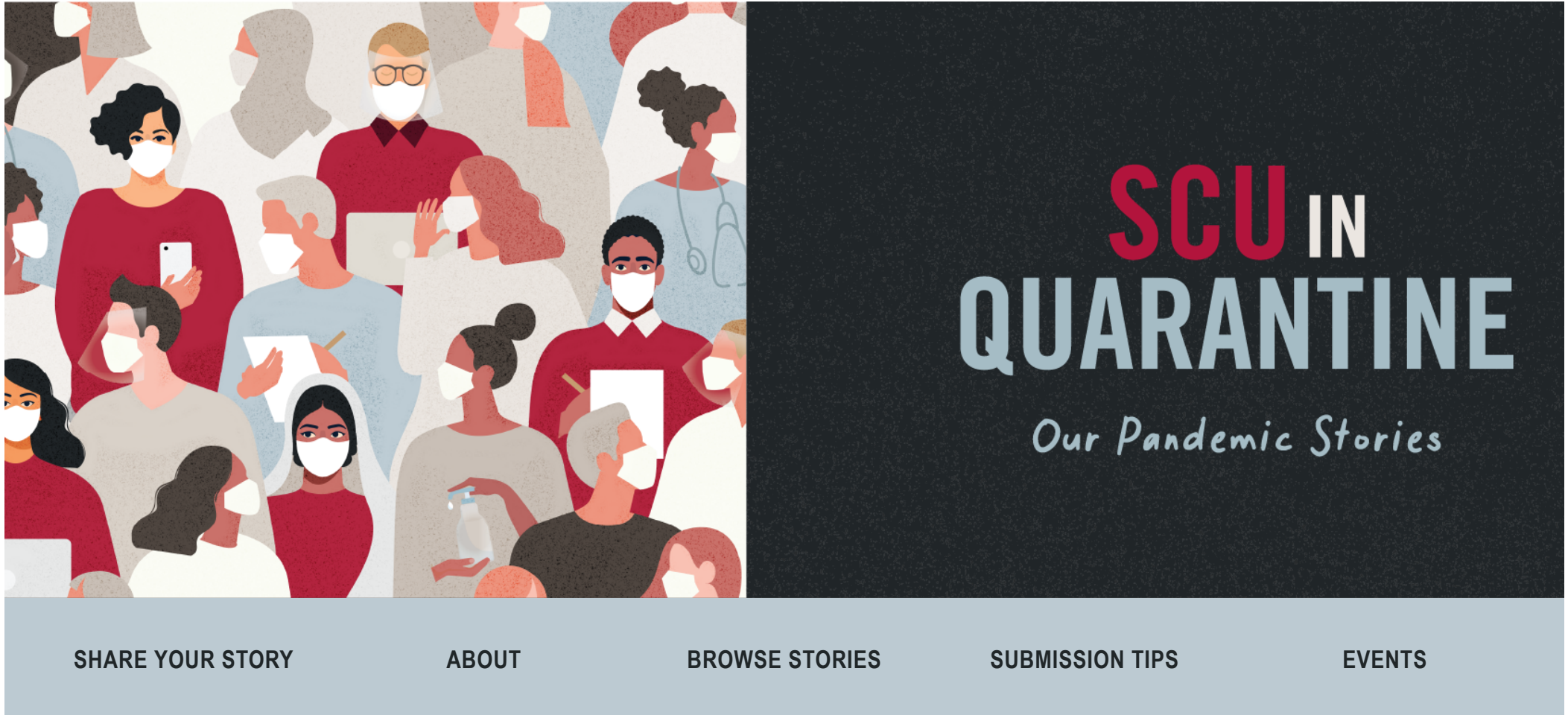
Chan Thai

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# Home

Chan Thai  
Assistant Professor, Department of Communication/Faculty Director in Finn Hall (Cura RLC)

A house is made of brick and stone, a home is a place made of the people who live there, where you feel comfortable and relaxed.

March 2020. I had been comfortably living in my 2 bedroom apartment in Finn Residence Hall at Santa Clara University for about 9 months. I had finally gotten around to adding those finishing touches to the apartment— artwork in the bathroom, those extra hooks by the door to hang Prince and Bowie (my two maltipoos)’s leashes, hanging the ceramic ceiling planter my best friend Lin had given to me for Christmas two years prior. It finally felt complete. I felt happy and settled. I had craved so long to have a home that I knew I would live in for a while.

I moved around a lot while working towards my educational and professional goals. Since turning 18, I had never lived in the same place for more than 2 years. When you choose a career in academia, there are many different phases of your life that may require you to move. I had moved after college, for a master’s degree, a Ph.D., and a post-doc. All of these transitions in my life had required me to move frequently, and to completely new cities. Whenever I moved to each place, it always felt temporary, because I knew that my program or training would end, and I would have to move on to the next thing. Until I landed at my “forever job,” which for academics is usually a tenure-track faculty job, it would be unlikely that I would be able to settle into a home.

Accepting a tenure-track job at Santa Clara University, only 15 minutes away from my parents and other family members, felt like a long-awaited homecoming. Moving into my apartment in Finn felt open-ended—no determined end to a lease, no more moves because the job or training program was over. I could really settle in and help build our newest Residential Learning Community, Cura, short for *cura personalis*—“care for the whole person.” Ironically, it was my finally learning how to care for myself as a whole person, acknowledging my personal needs rather than focusing solely on developing my professional identity and career, that brought me home to the Bay Area and to SCU.

I didn’t know what to expect living among 360 students, and I have to admit, I anticipated the worst—loud residents, maybe feeling out of place since I was a professor and also so much older than the residents, but I was so pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed interacting with the residents. Students would say hi to me and Prince and Bowie when we went on walks, I could count on seeing the same residents in our common spaces and check in with them. Everyone was respectful and contributed to the community. Finn Hall was not just a place we all slept in, but a home full of people who shared similar values and who cared for one another and the community.

March 2021. It’s been a year since the students were sent home for what we thought would be 3 weeks to “flatten the curve.” I am still living in Finn Hall, and my apartment is still “complete,” but Finn feels less like a home without the students here. There’s no one to greet me and Prince and Bowie when we head out of the building. No one studying late at night, and me encouraging them to prioritize their sleep because no one will remember what grade they got on that exam in a year. I am eagerly awaiting for this pandemic to be over and for all the students to come home.

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