When I've felt lonely this year, I've often told myself that I'm too busy to reach out to or call people, or that it's too much effort for not much in return. The few social situations I've been in this year have often felt unfulfilling, or a temporary reprieve to an unsolvable problem. Worse, I've left some feeling reminded of my isolation when I had been relatively happier previously. For all these reasons, I've put very little energy into social interaction recently. However, during the week after my birthday, my brother came to visit and I called a friend from college, as well as participated in a few meetings for an RSO I'm involved in. I felt better than I had in weeks (less workload helped too). I think this is a reminder that community is vital to my well-being, and that it's worth it to put in the work to find and build it, however difficult the circumstances.

My vision and passion fuel me every day to keep going with this path despite the difficulties. I do this because I have love for the world and its inhabitants and a vision for how I can contribute to the movements to better it. Whether I am accepted into my program of choice or not, I will find a way to do the work that needs to be done. Beyond this truth that helps stabilize me, I am proud of myself for my continued effort to better my design skills despite the stress and feelings of futility.

I didn't find much at UW too surprising, and feel like I'm yet to really dive into the Honors community and UW at large. Like many elite liberal universities, UW preaches diversity and inclusion and continues to engage in practices that go against these principles, such as continued use of exploitative prison labor and investment in fossil fuels. I remain and am perhaps more skeptical of elite institutions than I was before my time at UW began, and find it difficult to trust or feel at home here when I feel such a discrepancy between what must be done and the current situation. Learning about or witnessing a conversation about crises is one thing; actively engaging in the work that has to be done to end them is another. While many at Honors are actively engaging in work to end crises, I feel quite far from that as I move step-by-step through my academic path. I feel caught in an endless series of Zoom calls as the world continues to crash around us.

At the end of autumn quarter, I look forward to a winter break with my family, spending time relaxing, reading, and working on personal projects during the last extended time in the academic year I'll spend at my family home. Then I will move on campus in Seattle, where I hope to connect with friends and organizations I'm interested in. I hope to involve myself with the Society for Ecological Restoration at University of Washington so I can do hands-on work to better the world and combat my feelings of helplessness, and do more on-campus organizing. To that end, I've lowered my credits for winter quarter to allow more time to build community and less stress from my workload.

Word Count: 548 Words