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Isolated and at Risk

Twelve nursing home and assisted living residents share what life has been like since the pandemic began

Rachel Chason and Rebecca Chan/The Washington Post

ROSA LEE HICKMAN, 75

Born and raised in South Carolina, but came to New York City in 1964 and never left. Moved to Moffat Gardens, an assisted-living facility operated by RiseBoro Community Partnership in Brooklyn two years ago after retiring as a nanny.



“I used to go to the park over in Bed-Stuy, seven days a week, 11 a.m. to 8 at night.

“My friends and I, we’d sit on the bench that got the tables so we can play our dominoes. When we finish playing, we sit there for a while, talk. I mostly listen to them and once in a while, they’ll ask, ‘Ma, what you think? Ma, what you got going on?’ They call me ‘Ma’ because I’m older than they is. I haven’t played dominoes since February. And I used to play every day. ... Those Jamaican guys, they think they can beat me. But that ain’t hardly so. They be there trying to beat me. Now, we can’t wait to see each other. Can’t wait to get to the park and play dominoes.

“I know at least six people who got the virus. Three of them, we used to play bingo together over in Queens. I felt terrible when I was told. I

worried for a couple hours real bad, then it eased off my mind. Every time they tell me, I worry for a while. Then it goes off my mind. I can't keep worrying all the time. I got to take it off my mind.”