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History 129A

18 May 2020

My Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19, or Coronavirus pandemic has put most of the world on hold, with no foreseeable end in sight. Currently I am a senior history major at the University of California, Los Angeles, and as of early May 2020, I have no idea when my life or the lives of others will return to the normality we all seek. Most places in California, such as Los Angeles where I reside, are under the guidance of a stay at home order, which dictates our ability to go outside and interact with one another. Some people are even in quarantine for multiple weeks, and are not allowed to leave their house for any reason whatsoever. The Covid-19 virus did not become a household topic in the United States until the early months of 2020, but it was not until March when any significant change occurred. On March 11, 2020, the National Basketball Association postponed the rest of their season while I was watching the first round of the Pac-12 basketball tournament on television, due to the Covid-19 virus concerns. This set-in motion a wave of closures, postponements, regulations, social distance guidelines and new hygienic protocols that changed lives overnight. The Covid-19 pandemic has not only affected myself, but it has also had a social and economic effect on millions of people and multiple countries worldwide.

Covid-19 first had its non-viral effects on me in my career field, which is the hospitality industry. I work as a bartender almost full time while attending UCLA, and I also work part time as a restaurant and bar consultant. While working at FIA Restaurant in Santa Monica, the Covid-19 virus situation slowly began to have its effects on the restaurant before the government implemented guidelines. When the virus became more of a household topic the restaurant had to take precautionary measures to provide peace of mind to the customers, in order to keep them satisfied with the restaurant. Toward the end of February 2020 new hygienic protocols were put in place, such as wiping down menus after every guests' use and providing anti-bacterial, wet handwipes to them as well. The restaurant also went as far as to pull Corona beer from the menu

due to the association with the Coronavirus name. The non-viral effects of Covid-19 were present in Santa Monica before the government mandatory guidelines, but continued to worsen.

Furthermore, in the first week of March 2020, many restaurants, including FIA, were mandated by the government to reduce their seating and include new social distancing measures to maintain the safety of customers and staff. However, on March 12th many restaurants in California chose to follow the California State Governor Gavin Newsom's recommendation that all bars and restaurants close in order to maintain social distance. From this moment millions of hospitality industry professionals, such as myself, have been out of work; most of them were fired or furloughed by their employers, who were cutting costs every way they could. This is not only taking place in California, and the entire U.S., but all over the world. Many of my industry professional colleagues in England, France and Italy are all in the same situation: unemployed and under stay at home orders. Many famous bars, such as Clyde Common in Portland, Oregon and The Pegu Club in New York City have closed entirely, illustrating to many of us career bartenders that the effects of this virus can be drastic on our industry.

Although my career as a student at UCLA has experienced some changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the show must go on. Classes in Spring 2020, which is my fifth quarter at UCLA as a transfer student, were changed from in person lectures to online format. This is not ideal, as I have never taken online classes and feel the learning environment is immensely different. I feel this has somewhat deprived me of my overall experience at UCLA, as the interactions on campus with fellow students and professors is a large part of the total experience; yet, I am aware that the guidelines in the U.S. right now are the best, safest measures to ensure everyone is healthy. Also, I live very close to campus, so if the option is presented in my last two quarters at UCLA to return to campus for classes, I will have the luxury to do so. I cannot say the

same for some of my other classmates, as UCLA recognized it may not be possible for international students to return to the U.S. for the upcoming fall semester 2020. This pandemic has affected my time at UCLA as a student, but I hope for an eventual return to in person classes before I graduate in March 2021.

Sports culture is another aspect of mine and my family's lives that has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. I played baseball for 17 years of my life, and just recently stopped playing after community college. A huge reason why I chose to attend UCLA was because of its sports culture and my love for sports, but the Covid-19 pandemic has put that experience on hold as well. On March 7, 2020, I attended the UCLA vs. USC basketball game at the Galen Center in Los Angeles, and less than a week later the PAC-12 basketball tournament was cancelled due to the Covid-19 virus. Although I am optimistic UCLA sports will return in the future, I am unsure of whether or not my family and I will be able to attend any of the games before I graduate. As a student and a spectator I feel as if I have again been deprived of my experience at UCLA; however, as a former athlete I cannot imagine losing the opportunity to compete in an event, or an entire season due to a pandemic. This is an unprecedented time for most people in the world that has created some extraordinary situations.

The social distance guidelines as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic are evident in everyday life. People are required to remain 6 feet apart at all times when out in public, and are also required to wear a mask over their nose and mouth when entering a public establishment, such as a grocery store. These social distance guidelines have had their consequences, and I have witnessed them since the beginning of the pandemic. I have seen people argue over the distance between them in grocery store entrances or checkout lines. I have even gotten frustrated with how some people neglect the social distance guidelines when out in public. Some people refuse

to wear a mask, and get frustrated when they are denied entrance to an establishment. I have seen it happen multiple times. Overall, I know that the social distance guidelines are necessary to stop the spread of the virus, but I feel they have created new social conflicts and tension between people that may never dissipate.

The economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the biggest worry for myself and the people I am closest with. The aforementioned closure of some of the most famous bars in the U.S. is only a small aspect of the possible impact this could have on the entire hospitality industry. I am involved in a bar consulting group that consists of myself and two others, and the restaurant we are consulting for is still under construction. We are not sure when we will be able to help open the restaurant, how we are going to do so under the new regulations and whether or not we are going to make a decent paycheck. This economic uncertainty applies to all small businesses, but specifically for restaurants, the new marketing tactic during the pandemic has been to offer take-out food in order to hopefully keep them profitable; however, most establishments still cut staff hours and laid off staff entirely regardless of their switch to take out. As reports of bankruptcy among businesses, colleges, professional sports teams and even professional sports leagues mount during the pandemic, myself, my colleagues and my family are worried for the U.S. economy. I read an article today, May 12, 2020, which claimed deflation is on the rise in the U.S. People are no longer purchasing items that are not considered necessary and this has caused prices to drop, which can result in a decrease in certain jobs. Deflation, is a key economic consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic that could further hinder the recovery of the U.S. economy.

The political environment of the U.S., and the world has also experienced some negative consequences due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many people believe the virus originated in China,

especially the Donald Trump administration, and diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China have experienced some tension as a result. Both countries claim the other is responsible for the outbreak of Covid-19, and the tension between the two governments has been relayed through public news outlets. This makes me worry about the consequences of this political environment, as the U.S. is dependent on China for production of goods for many different companies. Also, the general election in the U.S. is scheduled to occur in November 2020, and prior to the outbreak of the virus democratic primaries occurred throughout the U.S. However, many have been postponed due to the outbreak, and I worry this may cause a delay in the 2020 general election. The future political consequences as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak are unpredictable, but the consequences we have experienced make the future unsettling.

My time at UCLA as a history major has awarded me a good understanding of world history. The transfer of the Coronavirus between all the continents of the world, reminds me of the concept of the Columbian Exchange. The Columbian Exchange is the exchange of plants, disease, livestock, people and technology that occurred following the expeditions of Christopher Columbus. This exchange of disease is attributed as the main cause of Native American deaths in North America, following contact with Europeans. The correlation between the Covid-19 pandemic and the Columbian Exchange is the spread of disease, and how this can affect people. The Covid-19 outbreak also illustrates to people of the modern world that the spread of disease is still prevalent today, and can have drastic outcomes as it did in previous centuries. Nevertheless, my understanding of the Columbian Exchange, previous epidemics and pandemics made me realize the importance of treating the Covid-19 situation serious from the start.

Furthermore, my experiences at UCLA studying U.S. history have provided me the knowledge to make the connection between the current economic situation, and the economic

situation during the Great Depression. When the Great Depression began, the Herbert Hoover administration contracted the U.S. money supply, which increased deflation at the start of the Great Depression and effectively made the situation in the U.S. worse. Also, the U.S. unemployment program is a result of the Great Depression, which has been effective at decreasing financial stress for myself and many other people during this pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic when the stock market dropped tremendously, the U.S. government funneled money into the U.S. economy to expand the money supply. This was done in an effort to stimulate the economy, combat eventual deflation and not make the same mistakes the U.S. government made at the start of the Great Depression, after the 1929 stock market crash.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown our world that we are still susceptible to a disease outbreak of great magnitude, and that our modern healthcare systems are not well equipped to handle a massive outbreak like this. Although the pandemic has had a negative effect on my career, my college experience at UCLA and my ability to participate in activities I love, there are much bigger things to worry about than just one individual like myself. Healthcare workers who are on the front line everyday fighting the pandemic are put in a situation where they might be scared, inexperienced, or ill-equipped. They are the heroes who will help get us through this tough time, and along with elected officials, help erase the consequences this pandemic has caused. It may take time for the scars to heal, but we have the right people doing the right things to ensure our safety, and I believe we will come out healthy on the other side of the Covid-19 pandemic.