

I am a fourth year biochemistry student at UCLA. The COVID-19 pandemic was something that was completely unexpected. At its earlier stages in late December to early January, I learned news of it being present in Wuhan, China, but I never imagined it would become a pandemic. This situation is unimaginable since this is the first global crisis I have been in. It might have been naïve, but I expected the US government or just any other countries' government to have taken serious action at the beginning. Even when cases began showing up in the US, it did not feel like people or organizations were taking it seriously as shown by the faulty and small quantity of test kits.

There have been over a million COVID-19 cases in the United States and over four million cases worldwide. In my opinion, this pandemic has revealed to many to the corruption and faults of the US government and how unprepared the entire world is for a global threats. My daily life has been disrupted and there is a constant worry whenever I need to go grocery shopping. My family has been facing even worse issues because jobs are closing. Stress has been slowly accumulating everyday about job and financial stability for our future. Like how life was for the natives in the New World when the Old World came, life after a vaccine is ready probably will not be the same due the economic and social damages.

My life and my family's have been stressful due to COVID-19 and online classes, but I believe I am much more fortunate than others. The shutdown of in-person classes has resulted in me leaving my apartment in Westwood to return home at La Puente. Fortunately, I live close by, so there is not much of a problem moving back. I know that for many others that this is not an option. Many are forced to stay there because they live too far, are not financially stable, or the safety risk is too much for them or their family. Academically, I also feel that I am fortunate than

others due to being a senior. Even though my focus and time spent studying have been severely hindered since the start of the online classes, all of my requirements for my major are done and I am just taking electives to finish up the school's credit requirements. For some other people, they are much worse academically because they are taking the core classes for their major. I believe that many will still pass the class, but their foundation for advanced classes will be hindered. It is hard to imagine how much I would actually learn and retain information if my chemistry or biochemistry classes were taken during this crisis.

My family's situation is also well compared to the terrible situations that are shown on the news. Financially, we are stable because my parents are good at saving money and we will probably be fine until the pandemic is over if we only purchase essential items. Their job stability has been affected by this pandemic. As of May 2020, my dad still has a job to return to, but my mom recently just received a message that the place she works has shut down. Because of unemployment benefits, we will be fine, but the future is a stressful situation. My mom has expressed concerns about finding a new job in the future and this had me concerned about my situation. The news that my mom received was so sudden and unexpected and it made me wonder how much jobs will be changed in the future. Many more companies and businesses will end up closing or downsizing, which leaves many unemployed. I fear that this will continue and will require a long amount of time before jobs begin to stabilize. The economy will be unstable when the pandemic settles and will take a while before things become normal.

This pandemic has also caused an overconsumption of news that has increased the stress levels for me and my family. People should be aware of current news, but overconsumption will cause excess stress and anxiety. Being stuck at home and having access to the internet and TV, news about COVID-19 and stuff related to it is always on. I can't help but to wonder about what

is going on with the world, which leads me to looking for news that is usually exaggerated and filled with negativity. My mom consumes even more because she has a lot of free time now. I can see that it stresses her out and causes more troubled thoughts than she needs. My dad does not consume much news, but food concern is a huge issue for him. When he heard about the possible meat shortage or any other shortage from rumors, he would constantly bring the topic up and suggest that we get more food. Despite food not being a problem for us and our fridge and freezer being filled with food, he still voices this concern. It is exhausting to hear this because it always brings up a possibility that we will run out of food even though this is very unlikely. All of this contributes to stress that makes life and focus much harder to maintain.

The consumption of media has always been a concern, but this pandemic making people stay at home and having more exposure could have a big negative consequence once this is over. People should be aware of COVID-19 and should be prepared to take precautions against it but stress should be proportional to the amount of cases surrounding the area that they or their family live in. In my city, there have been no cases, but there are some people who have not left their house since the “Stay at Home” order was announced. People should still be separated and wear masks as a precaution but stress should not be in control of our lives. Seeing the millions of cases being presented in media has made it feel like the chances are high to contract the disease even though it is low. Despite our technological advantages, the human brain has not adapted to the concept of global news. For me, I should be just be focusing on my studies or focus on my entertainment, but my mind wonders and stress over the chance that a COVID-19 case could be present in my city. Mental health could become a much bigger concern once the pandemic is over.

I find it surprising that COVID-19 managed to become a pandemic because of the technological developments and historical data that we have. History of the natives in America has shown how disastrous a new unknown disease can cause to a population. The natives and the Old World travelers were not aware of the science behind this, but we are aware. Despite having knowledge, the US government allowed it to spread by not taking the proper precautions. People traveled back into the US from high profile areas but were not subjected to the full two-week quarantine. When the US was offered test kits from WHO, it was refused because they wanted to develop their own test kits, which was faulty and inaccurate. This resulted in a similar but less drastic situation as the natives. The natives had their social life and economy collapse as people died and we are facing a similar but less drastic situation by people being forced to stay indoors as the economy falls because of the rising unemployment levels.

Another thing that the pandemic presented is the failure of the US government to protect its citizens. In these times, people need to stay home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but people are coming out with protest. People are protesting because they need to work and make money to feed themselves and to pay rent. This finally highlights a problem that has been occurring in the US. There are many people who are working from paycheck to paycheck, which means they do not have the savings to maintain life without a job. The government should be working to fix the economy and prevent corporations from heavily profiting against people's lives. The pandemic showed that the issue has always been present and should expose the reality of the corruption and schemes that have been going on with the corporations and the government.

The government did take some actions and handed out a check of \$1200, but this only brought more concerns of their plans. A check of \$1200 every two weeks will certainly help people out to pay for food and their rent, but this does not fix the bigger issue. It feels like that

the government is tossing money to the public and hope that what we do with the money will make us forget about their incompetence. They could have worked towards plans to relieve debt or rent during these times, but they chose a simple check. The less fortunate people who get sick will use up all their money for treatment, which points to healthcare being something they should focus on. It highlights the problem of for-profit health insurance companies. There are people expressing concerns of the cost of getting treatment or test because it cost too much money. This pandemic really shows the reality of how faulty this system is when health becomes this huge of a concern. I hope that people will vote afterwards to adapt a system of free healthcare like other countries or at least have nonprofit health insurance companies.

I feel like corporation's true motives are also being displayed due the pandemic. Corporations also continue to seem play sneaky tactics to try and divert people's thoughts from the true issue. Many companies are still operating because they provide essential business to the public, but they offer very little in hazard pay. These many companies are calling their hazard pay, "Hero Bonus" or just create ads celebrating these them. It feels like they are labeling these workers as heroes to distract the public that they are not paying them well. In a way, calling these workers as heroes or making ads about them is the compensation that workers are receiving. These companies should just pay their workers more and it would produce a much better result. Another reason that they are doing this is because they can. If people quit, there will be people to take their spot despite the risk that the job has. Smaller stores, such as family owned ones, are better in this aspect, but they are shutting down due this pandemic. This only makes large corporations stronger to decide whatever they want. After the pandemic is over, it would not surprising to see the economy and social life of the majority of the public being extremely poor, while the rich grow even stronger.

Looking back in history, this is corruption is like a modernize version of the elites and nobles terror on the lower class in the Iberian peninsula in the 14th and 15th centuries. The big difference is that they cannot attack and do whatever they want publicly. Instead, they do it in a more subtle way through treatment towards workers, which makes it unnoticeable to a large portion of the population. The wages that some people are making cannot sustain them if disasters happen, but people are forced to work under them because they have no option. Conditions will get worse under an unstable economy.

I have hope that more people will realize this and fight against the government and corporations for living wages and not minimum wages. If this does not happen, there might be huge consequences for the economy and social life. As family business are losing money and going bankrupted, the large corporations are gaining more and more power. If the government do not listen and fight for living wages, corporations will be controlling our lives. Life will get harder because there is less choice. If the economy moves in this direction, there will be a breaking point where things will get extremely violent. Looking at the Iberian Peninsula during the time of the elite's terror, things were solved by violent force through the command of Queen Isabella. I fear that this pandemic will only increase the progression towards this violent event if the government does not do anything about it. People also need to act by voting for better candidates to serve the population in order for the quality of life to improve once the pandemic is over.