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### My Coronavirus Experience

In early March, I remember nervous chatter revolving around some sort of deadly virus circulating around mainland China, however, at the time I was more concerned about taking my winter-quarter finals than I was of some unlikely, catastrophic pandemic. My roommates and I even joked about the possibility of having take-home finals, but alas, these were just fantasies. We were blissfully unaware of what was about to occur. Or so I thought. Later that week, as people were becoming increasingly anxious about the worsening viral outbreak, my professors tried to pacify our concerns, and one even went so far as to make a whole PowerPoint showing us why our fears were unfounded. Ironically though, school was canceled the following day due to fears of an outbreak occurring on campus. Since then, the Coronavirus has taken the lives of over 300,000 globally and has infected 4.79 million people. While this virus is new, its destructive effects are not. It has reoccurred numerous times of the course of history. The effects of a pandemic historically have and continue to largely affect the economically and physically vulnerable due to the conditions in which those in power create which further deepen inequality.

Since the University of California-Los Angeles switched to remote learning, I no longer live in the dorms which has been a long-awaited right of passage for a first-year transfer student. I have dreamed of dorming and of having the “college experience” ever since I was in high school, however, due to financial reasons, I attended community college for my first two years of

college. But the wait was worth it, and I was finally able to fulfill my long-anticipated dream of attending UCLA. I loved joining the many different clubs like the Bruin Artists Group and being a member of UCLA's Undergraduate Students Association Council. Community college was not the most social place so I really enjoyed participating in all of the exciting on-campus activities like movie nights on the quad or playing board games with my roommates. In addition to the positive social elements that the school provided, attending class in lecture halls filled with eager students filled me with so much excitement, and this environment cultivated a rich environment of learning that often felt nonexistent at my community college. Being on campus and working alongside people who had been there since their freshman year helped validate my hard work and the sacrifices I made while at community college.

While moving home has been quite a transition, it has been a mainly positive one because I have been spending a lot more time with my family. Previously, when I was attending community college and living at home, I was working full-time as well as taking a full course load, so it has been a wonderful experience to be able to hang out with one another when previously our schedules didn't allow for it. While it is nice being home, I do miss the in-class lectures, my friends, and even the questionable burritos served on the Hill, and I treasure my time there. Moving out of the dorms has been difficult at times as I have been waiting to experience UCLA for so long, thankfully, I have been able to retain some of the activities that I participated in while at UCLA. I am still able to keep my tutoring job because I have been able to work remotely, but my parents, on the other hand, have experienced severe hour cuts which has put an immense financial and emotional strain on them, and many of my cousins, aunts, and uncles have also experienced hour cuts and some have even been laid off.

Additionally, my family and I have experienced great personal loss. A dear family friend who I have known for all my life has passed away due to the coronavirus as a result of her pre-existing health conditions. Her health struggles mainly resulted in her inability to afford dialysis. She was only thirty-three, and she leaves behind a loving family of seven. This has been the biggest struggle facing me and my family during this time, and it has shown me how precious and fragile life is.

In regards to my community at UCLA, I have been hearing stories about the suffering my fellow students have been experiencing. I have heard of some who have been forced back into homes where they are facing abuse, others have been left homeless, and many have lost their jobs. I fear for their financial status and physical/mental health, and I struggle to find ways to help. This pandemic has shined a light on those most vulnerable in our families, our communities, and our country. Much like my dear friend who passed, those who have been affected the worst have been those with pre-existing health issues and those who cannot afford to take care of themselves, yet this problem is not new. No, it has happened time and time again.

The numerous outbreaks that have occurred throughout human history have resulted from the conditions created by those in power that exacerbate the disease's deadliness from the conditions they have created. As a result, this disproportionately affects the vulnerable. Much like the indigenous who suffered from a multitude of diseases brought over by the Spanish, those in power created the conditions for the disease to flourish and further deepen the inequality facing this already vulnerable group. Due to the harsh conditions that Christopher Columbus created by enslaving the Arawak on his second voyage to the Americas, hundreds of indigenous people died of diseases as a result of the unsanitary living conditions and due to the fact that they

had never been exposed to these diseases before (Ruiz, lecture April 27). The indigenous' suffering from the diseases was exacerbated by the Spaniards forced harsh labor, lack of proper medical care, and poor access to food (Ruiz, lecture April 27). Similarly, with the Coronavirus, the disease has been disproportionately affecting the homeless, those with pre-existing conditions, the incarcerated, and those who do not have access to sanitary living conditions. Because these people are already facing either health or economic struggles, this disease will further strengthen the cycle of inequality by pushing them further into poverty or killing them. It is clear that regardless of time period or location, when people are unable to access sanitary living situations, food, and healthcare, diseases become deadlier.

Unfortunately, we are doomed to repeat history. Due to a lack of affordable healthcare and a social system that can provide livable housing, many will needlessly die, and those who will die will largely be the aforementioned vulnerable groups. This vicious cycle will continue, and inequality in this country will be deepened further. I look at the victims like my dear friend or those who died from as a result of inaccessible healthcare, and I realize that this problem transcends both time and place, but I hope with all my heart that despite historic trends of inaction, we will finally attempt to help those who are most vulnerable in our society.