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Consequences of a Global Pandemic

When I left Los Angeles for spring break, I did not think it would be the last time I would see campus as an undergraduate student. If I would have known I would have taken one last walk around campus, absorbing the beautiful scenery, and remembering that I belong. I feel as if I am in a dream, or rather that my time in Los Angeles was a dream. I look back, even though it was only two months ago, and it seems like a different world. Then I am reminded that it was a different world, a world before COVID-19. The nation is experiencing many changes. Everyone is having to adjust to the new normal. The biggest moments in one's lives like graduation, funerals, and weddings are being canceled, postponed, or recreated in the bounds of what is considered safe. Although life must go on, it seems like it is being put on hold. But when is the end? Will it ever be normal again?

The cancelation of spring quarter at UCLA happened so quickly. One moment I was counting down the days to go back and the next I was trying to process having to deal with online classes. I spent most of my break watching Tik Toks of other college students coming to terms with their own experiences. It helped me to cope. It also made me realize as a person who studies history, that those social media posts will be considered primary sources in the future. Mourning the loss of continuing and finishing school in person seemed selfish when I know that there are those who are struggling to put food on the table or pay their bills. Everyone in my family lost their jobs, except my father because he is a minister. My mother was lucky enough to get unemployment to continue to pay bills and such. Throughout this time, I have noticed that I have become more empathetic. I have felt anxious and sad because I know how hard it is for some people. It hurts my heart knowing there are people who are having to choose between

paying bills and keeping food on the table. Those who were living paycheck to paycheck and are now experiencing more stress. I also know that those with mental health issues are also struggling as I have seen it firsthand with my own brother. It made me realize that we as a nation should not wait for disasters to occur to have help available, but that it should be ready when things like this occur. Mental health, access to food, and laws that prohibit people from having to be kicked out of their homes should not have been thought of, reviewed and passed in the middle of the pandemic, but it is better late than never.

Attending school online is challenging. It is hard to focus, and I find myself with no motivation to fully commit myself to what I am learning. It is hard when I am worried about how I am supposed to find a job when I graduate or if I will even be able to put my degree to use. It is hard when I do not even have a room to go into to study, read, and work because there are too many people in my family and not enough rooms. It is especially hard when my family members are not mindful of their volume. I know that what I am saying can be seen as excuses, but it does not negate the fact that it is extremely difficult to enjoy and focus on school. I feel as if I am wasting my money on school this quarter. I have been under a shelter in place order from Spring break and it is not expecting to lift until the first week of June. That is if those in charge do not take into account the rising cases in my county. I had a lot to look forward to this spring quarter that I feel was ruined and I feel bad for being sad because I know there are people dying and there are others being overworked.

Besides losing the ability to attend school in person, the other greatest changes in my life have been revolving around religion and rethinking my life plans. My father loves and respects God more than anything in this physical world. It is admirable. When the shelter in place was announced he mourned what it meant for the church, but he also knew he had a responsibility to

God and to the church he was leading. My father tried his best to comply to the safety regulations, telling those who were high risk to excuse themselves but that if they did attend, he would make sure they would be safe. He made sure those entering the building were coming in one at a time washing their hands, sitting six feet apart and were wearing masks. My family and I feared that one day the cops would come in and arrest my dad, like we saw they had done in some of the southern states. I thought, if people can be in close proximity in grocery stores why can't we attend church if we are following the same guidelines? I have never feared attending church until this pandemic, and I did not like that I had to feel like I was breaking the law to worship my God, the same God who was providing me, and others with some spiritual comfort in a time of great anxiety. I have a command to meet on every first day of the week to partake in communion, to give of my means, and to worship and I was willing to break the law to follow my God.

Before the start of this pandemic, I was eager to graduate and start my career. I wanted to study Tejano culture and art, move to San Antonio, Texas, and work in the missions. However, I know that I will have to wait some time before that even happens. I cannot apply to grad school because I have no references, I cannot move because I cannot find a job to save money, and most museums and missions are closed to the public. As a result, I have had to look for other ways to make money to pay my bills. While I am waiting to find a job, I created an online shop through the platform Depop where I sell thrifted clothing, new name brand clothing, and popular culture clothes and accessories. For right now, I am selling everything I do not wear or have no use for. I have done fairly well, well enough to consider it as an extra stable source of income once I do get a job. It made me realize that I need to be open to and aware of the fact that any moment I

can be without a job if there is ever an emergency or pandemic again. I need to have options just in case.

That being said, this pandemic has made me rethink the way I spend my money. I know that most companies and people are struggling, but I believe those companies that are a part of a chain or are multi-million and billion-dollar companies will be able to survive this pandemic. With the limited money I do have, I have been trying to spend it at small business. For example, instead of getting pizza at a chain, I buy it from a local pizza shop. Instead of buying new clothes from well-known stores, I purchase from other online buyers on the app. Right now, having enough money is a cause for concern and I feel like helping small businesses makes me feel like I am doing something to help.

This pandemic has made me rethink a lot of my opinions on society. This country needs to be better prepared for situations like this. Healthcare workers should have all the protective gear they need and more and there should not be a shortage. Those deemed essential workers should regularly get paid more, not only when their value is shown in extreme situations. Mental health services should be available for all, but especially for those dealing with the high stresses of society not just now but all the time. If we want to be united, we have to take care of each other. At the end of the day we are all just people who are living life. It is our responsibility not to be selfish but to contribute to make our society better, not just for a small group of people but for everyone.

Nothing is going to be the same coming out of this pandemic. The way we interact with each other is going to be different. Just like how smart phones changed the way people have interacted with others in person, this pandemic will have the same impact. There is a possibility that wearing masks everywhere becomes the new normal, completely avoiding others and their

physical presence becomes a thing, and it becomes harder to meet new people in real life. There is a possibility with the technology that a majority of things that were once in person now all remain online. School, church, ordering food, grocery shopping, all with the click of a button. Will that be the new normal? As cities are opening up, will everything be like it once was, pre-corona?

I do not know how to gauge the effects of this pandemic on the politics of the United States. What I did notice, especially in the beginning, was the tendency of some to label Republicans as racist because President Donald Trump and others had labeled coronavirus as the “Chinese Virus”. I understand how it can be seen as racist, but I also do understand that maybe they were labeling that way because it seemed to have originated there. Whatever the case, it created heightened xenophobia against Asian people everywhere. Some have had to endure racial slurs, dirty looks, and stereotyping. They become outcasts in a society that blames them for the state of the world. Another thing I think this pandemic has done is help the government to rethink their economic ties with China. Many companies are rethinking outsourcing their labor from China and perhaps back to the United States. I also think voting in elections may change, especially if this virus reemerges stronger in the fall. I believe California now became a vote by mail state and it was instated by governor Gavin Newsom in this past month of May. I think it many other states may follow.

When I think about this pandemic and how it is affecting the world, I am reminded of when the Spanish first came to the Americas and brought with them diseases that they were immune to. Small pox was one of them and it was devastating for the indigenous peoples living in the Americas. Natives had no immunity, and most suffered. Some cases were extreme and

others milder according to records just like cases today.¹ Right now, everyone across the globe is susceptible. There is no known immunity. The death tolls and infections have been high. Coronavirus, just like smallpox, is a silent killer and we just like the indigenous of the New world are walking around afraid. In Spanish society those who were ill had to live on the outskirts of society, essentially quarantined.² Those who are sick today are also quarantining in an effort to avoid others from becoming sick. In some cases, most people today are living on the outskirts of society even though we are all in close quarters. Asians and Asian Americans are also outcasted just because they are seen in a bad light, essentially pushing them out of society.

All in all, the world coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic will be profoundly different than what we knew a couple months ago. The New World was never the same after Spanish arrival, and although we did not experience colonizers coming into our world and taking over us and destroying our culture, we are experiencing a pandemic that is killing people and devastating society economically, politically, and socially. The world we once knew may take a while to get back to. Social distancing may be the new normal, at least for a while. We will come out of this pandemic stronger, safer, and well prepared for another instance like this. At least one can hope. But for now, we remain in our homes with our families leaving behind the interaction we once knew, waiting, and hoping for the end.

¹ *The Siege of Tenochtitlan*, 125.

² Teofilo Ruiz, *Spanish Society, 1348 – 1700* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017).

Bibliography

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The Siege of Tenochtitlan, week 5 on CCLE, 125.

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