

A Reflection on COVID-19

By: Dominic Gutierrez

18 May 2020

At the end of 2019, a strange sickness had hit several citizens in China, specifically the city of Wuhan. The patients were treated for what many doctors believed was pneumonia, however the sickness spread rampantly throughout the city and by the end of January the city of Wuhan was placed under lockdown. The sickness was given the name COVID-19, or the Coronavirus, a virus that attacks and shuts down the respiratory system. The Coronavirus is especially dangerous to the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions, like asthma, heart disease, or diabetes. Within a short amount of time, the virus escalated into a global pandemic, putting cities and countries all over the world on lockdown. As of mid-May there are over four million confirmed cases and roughly a quarter of a million deaths caused by the Coronavirus. The pandemic has left the world in a very “different” state, as everyday life has drastically changed. COVID-19 has impacted all scales of life, globally, nationally, and has affected my life personally, like many others. As I reflect on this global pandemic, I continue to ask myself the same question, “When will this all be over?”

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a big impact on my life personally, due to the numerous lifestyle changes it has forced me to make. Presently, I am a second year student at UCLA, majoring in history. At this time I would be up at my dorm hanging out with my roommates or at the Young Research Library, sitting at my usual desk on the fourth floor, gazing out through the window, admiring the beautiful campus. However, I am back and living at my home in Downey, California, a small city about fifteen miles south of Los Angeles. During our spring break at the end of March, UCLA recommended that students move out of their dorms and stay at home if they could for the upcoming spring quarter in order to secure the safety of their students. I completely understood the school’s decision as such a large school with so many students living in so close a proximity to each other is especially dangerous. My parents were more than happy to have me safe at home, especially because the virus is more of a danger to me as a Type 1 Diabetic. I have been living with Diabetes for almost three years now, as I was diagnosed at the end of my junior year in high school. Because of Diabetes, my immune system is weaker than the average person and recovering from a sickness takes twice as long. I have to take extra

precaution with this virus as it could be severely dangerous to me. Any little cough or sneeze gets my mind racing and a panic begins to set in, thinking to myself, “Is this the beginning of the end?” After a while I begin to finally calm down and reassure myself that everything is okay. In order to stay safe and keep my mind off the pandemic, I am mainly at home spending most of my days attempting to focus on schoolwork. This spring quarter was being taught through virtual instruction, with professors holding live video lectures via Zoom, or posting recordings of them lecturing material. This new change definitely took time getting adjusted to. It is a much different environment as I am “going to class” while in the comfort of my bedroom. I sometimes find it difficult trying to get into the right mental state to focus on lectures, readings, and studying for tests. My motivation is often times challenged when I know I can simply lay in my bed, sleep through my classes and not have a care in the world; however I do my best to push through. I miss my roommates, my friends, and my girlfriend of three years. We find ways to communicate, through facetime, texting, and social media, but it is not the same. The people I am mainly in contact with is my family – which includes my dad who works as a police officer, my mom who works as a teacher, and my eighteen year old little sister. Thankfully they all help me keep positive during these times and I know I can talk to each of them about any and everything. Besides the occasional bickering, I am grateful to have them with me and fully healthy. As I take a step back, I realize that I must cherish the many things I take for granted every day – my health, the health of my family and friends, having the security of knowing that I get to sleep with a roof over my head and knowing where my next meal will come from. I am thankful that I possess all of these things, when many are not as fortunate to say the same thing. Although at some points during this pandemic, I have been upset about the many places, activities, and people I am missing out on, I am at peace and extremely grateful for the things I do have.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many different changes in my lifestyle and has also impacted the lives of others around the nation and the world. The city of Wuhan, China was the first confirmed case of the virus and in a short amount of time, many of the city’s inhabitants contracted the virus. However, Wuhan and Chinese officials did not put the city under quarantine fast enough which

allowed many who were asymptomatic to leave the city. The virus then spread throughout the world and infected people all across the globe. As a result, several countries have issued an emergency state and have placed their nation in lockdown. One country that was hit severely was Italy, who was the first country to have a nationwide lockdown in early March after a string of reported cases and hundreds of deaths. Other countries in Europe were soon to follow, such as Germany, France, Spain, and the U.K. The United States was affected dramatically as the number of confirmed cases and deaths increased exponentially as the days passed. New York was the epicenter in the United States causing a majority of the states to be put under lockdown as well. These lockdowns encourage civilians to stay at home and to only leave when necessary such as getting food and groceries. The usage of facemasks has now become a regular sight out in public, as often times businesses have made it mandatory for their customers in order to receive service. Many businesses have been forced to shut down due to regulations or even fear of the virus itself. Only businesses and jobs deemed “essential” are being allowed to continue working through the pandemic. Those that are doing an exemplary job during these difficult times are those working in the medical field and the first responders. Medical researchers and scientists are tirelessly working to try and find solutions and a possible vaccine to help put a stop to the virus. Doctors, nurses, and other specialists are committed to helping save the lives of as many people as they can. By treating and helping those who have contracted the Coronavirus, they are selflessly putting their lives at risk, wanting nothing more than for their patients to be free of the virus and be able to see their families once again. In these times of global pandemic, those working in the medical field are the true heroes of the world. Their brave sacrifices and actions should be celebrated and thanked continuously by all. Evidently, the world has been greatly impacted and many people’s lives have changed as a result of the Coronavirus. The passing of new protective measures and the reliance of the essential workers, especially the brave actions of those in the medical field, are doing their best to help society in these difficult times.

These lifestyle changes and other negative consequences due to the Coronavirus pandemic has detrimentally affected the political, economic, and social spheres globally. To begin, the Coronavirus has

impacted the landscape of politics. Diplomatic relations between the United States and China have taken a hit recently due to the handling of the virus. The Trump administration has come out and spoken against the Chinese government as the United States believed that China relayed information about the virus very late. United States government officials thought that if the Chinese government would have released information on the state of the virus in a timely manner, the situation in the United States and globally would have been much better and possibly made it easier to contain the virus. The Chinese government is outraged by the United States' claims as well as with President Trump continuously calling COVID-19, the "Chinese Virus." These circumstances caused by the virus have worsened relations between two global powerhouses. As well, citizens are having problems domestically as they have begun to question their own government. Many people, especially in the United States have questioned both state and national officials if they are taking the proper measures against the virus. This is very troublesome as in times of crisis and a global pandemic, we should all be together and on the same page. The virus is attacking the health of people while simultaneously pitting us against each other. Additionally, COVID-19 has also been detrimental to the economic state of the world. With the majority of the world in some form of lockdown and quarantine, only "essential" businesses are currently open. As a result, the economy is down, and the world is spiraling towards a global recession. Many people who are not deemed as essential workers are left out of work at home, struggling to meet ends meet and provide for their family. A plethora of small businesses are electing to remain open during the pandemic as they need the business to live, putting themselves in danger because of the unfortunate situation they are placed in. The other small businesses that have closed are left to sit and pray hoping the pandemic passes over soon and that life is returned to how it was before quarantine. The economy and the people around the world are suffering heavily financially because of the ramifications and effects of the virus, with very little to do to fix the situation except wait. The final consequence of the Coronavirus is the effect it has on the social sphere. The lockdown and quarantine implemented due to the pandemic has harshly restricted social interactions and gatherings between everyone. As schools have gone to

online instruction, seniors will not be able to experience their graduation ceremonies, a momentous occasion. All of these students' years of hard work and dedication to their academics will not be celebrated and commemorated as they rightfully should. Birthday parties and other celebrations are held over Zoom calls, missing out on the happy and joyous celebrations with one's family, friends, and loved ones. Restaurants, movie theaters, malls, beaches, and other places where people go to spend time and have fun with others are closed and shut down to the public. People are left to social distance and remain in contact only with the people in their close and immediate circle. Social interactions have been dramatically limited during the COVID-19 pandemic, making people wish they could enjoy time out of their house with the people they love again. Overall, the virus has impacted all aspects of life around the world, politically, economically, and socially.

When looking and reflecting on the COVID-19 outbreak, I begin to wonder how the history books will remember the epidemic and what its legacy will be. When news first released about the breakout in Wuhan, I admit I thought that the situation was not that serious and that it would not affect me in the slightest. Two months later, I was moving my belongings out of my dorm and preparing to undergo spring quarter at home. Even then, I thought that everything would blow over and lockdown would be lifted by mid-April. Now I sit reflecting on COVID-19 in mid-May with no signs of life returning to normalcy anytime soon. These times have been challenging and strange to say the least, a time that people of this generation will remember vividly for the rest of their lives. But what about the generations to come? How will the COVID-19 pandemic be remembered? Will there be sections in the history books on the virus and how it affected the world? Completely omitted and forgotten? Will it compare to some other pandemics through history, such as the Bubonic Plague, Smallpox, and the Spanish Influenza? I personally believe that it will be in the history books and be remembered for many years to come. Historians and scholars alike will see this as a groundbreaking event that completely changed the world we live in. The virus has done more than affect people physically, it has brought the world into a hysteria and constant state of paranoia with the fear of contracting the virus. Although the

Bubonic Plague, Smallpox, and the Spanish Influenza all have a significantly higher death toll, they all are similar to the Coronavirus with respect to the fear it has brought to the people of this world. I do concede that I do not think that the Coronavirus will get near the amount of deaths as the previously mentioned diseases, however I believe it will appear in the history books right alongside them. We cannot solely judge the Coronavirus based on the mortality rate alone, but instead look at the massive impact it played globally just like the other diseases. Besides the written history aspect, its infamy will live on through the oral history of generations to come. When the Coronavirus is finally contained and suppressed, everyone who lived through it will reflect on the times of living through a global pandemic, remembering the trials and tribulations they had to undergo. My generation will be telling our children the experiences and times we lived through, sharing with them a part of us, a part of our history, as the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic will live on for centuries to come.

The Coronavirus has severely impacted my life and those around the world, in all aspects; politically, economically, and socially. The virus has virtually shut down the world and has forced many changes to everyone's lifestyles. I hope, like everyone else, that the virus and its problems are soon eliminated, and life can return back to normal. I desperately want to be able to see and spend time with my family and friends, go out and eat at a restaurant, watch a movie at the movie theater, and participate in many other activities out in the public sphere. Yet, even with all these negative sentiments and feelings, I have tried my best to remain positive and optimistic, looking at the bright spots. The quarantine has taught me the importance of my family and loved ones, to cherish the moments you get to spend with them, and the blessing of having good health. Tell your family you love them, and how much they mean to you. We must stand together during these difficult times and spread as much positivity and love as possible. We will get through this. Throughout history mankind has been able to get through the darkest of times. History is all about the ability to persevere, overcome, and show resilience – this is no different. Together, as one, we will get through this.