

University of California, Los Angeles

History 129A COVID-19 Assignment

Elvis Pilat
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Professor Teofilo Ruiz
TA: Rebecca Martinez
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Coronavirus has drastically changed the lives of everyone. On both the small and large scale, the world may very well never return to how it used to be. Coronavirus has single handedly sparked new conversations about racism, paranoia, safety, and mental health. Much like older pandemics such as the Spanish Flu and smallpox, coronavirus will be in our minds for the decades to come, and will alter society from here on out.

I can still remember the moment I felt like college was over. Sitting in the library looking over my final paper outline for winter quarter. After a quick glance at my email on my way to the cafe during a break I saw the email. In bold letters it read "SPRING QUARTER WILL BE OFFERED ONLINE". My heart dropped. The end of my academic life would be spent behind a computer screen. In the following weeks I began to realize everything that I would miss in the final months of my college education. I never got to properly say goodbye to many of my friends, most of them leaving for home and not returning until the fall. Coronavirus has taken away many of the college traditions that I had yet to experience before my graduation.

The effect that coronavirus has had on my family has been significant. My grandmother has chronic arthritis and in recent years has had more and more trouble being mobile. Although her body is becoming less and less cooperative, this has never stopped her from gardening, going on long daily walks, and working at the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden. However, walking has become more and more painful for her. One of her biggest problems for the past year has been a hip which is failing. We had finally narrowed down a date for her to get a hip replacement: spring break. Unfortunately when that time came around, the pandemic had already begun, and out of fear of her

getting sick during recovery due to her old age, we decided to postpone her surgery into the summer. This time change became a big problem, as my mom is a medical professional and would not be able to take any time off in the foreseeable future, and I was stuck in my apartment three hundred miles away. This rescheduling caused lots of commotion as well as frustration in the family. My grandmother is in pain, and having a very hard time moving around. Would it be worth it to put her at risk for her to get the surgery earlier and recover earlier? Or is it better to wait and keep her in pain until there's a time when the hospital will be safer for her to be in? These are still questions that we are not sure there are right answers to, but she is too worried about getting sick to warrant sending her to the hospital. Coronavirus has put lots of strain on the relationship between my mother and my grandmother.

To say that the relationship between my mother and grandmother was explosive would be putting it lightly. Although they both love each other, they have always been constantly at odds, with my mother demanding she not do things due to straining herself or other reasons, and my grandmother immediately circumvents any restriction that has been put in place. With the newly put in place lockdown, it has taken an even greater toll on the mental health of my mother. On top of longer shifts at the hospital, she is in a constant state of worry about my grandmother. Although my grandmother has agreed to stay in the house, this does not stop her from overexerting herself gardening and constantly trying to clean her house. The lockdown has posed itself as a large problem for my grandmother's mental health. She used to spend lots of time at her friend's houses, talking with them or running into them at the markets, but now she hasn't seen

them for months. For someone born before the era of video calling and the virtual social sphere, not being able to see your friends face to face is much more lonely for the older generations than those who grew up in a time of Skype and FaceTime. With each passing week my grandmother gets lonelier and lonelier, with the only person she comes in face to face contact with being my mother. This does little to help however, as my mother is deathly afraid of getting my grandmother sick, and although she pick up groceries for her, she insists that my grandmother be at least ten feet away from her when she enters the house to drop off groceries. Out of everyone in my family or friend group, I feel that my grandmother is the one who is being most affected by Coronavirus in my immediate circles. The amount of isolation she faces is far greater than anyone else I know. Even on the phone it is easy to tell that she deeply misses the social interaction that we all used to take for granted.

Coming out of the epidemic, I feel that society will be changed greatly. Coming out of the pandemic, I feel that personal interactions will be very different than the ones that we have seen in the past. Interactions will be significantly more awkward right after lockdown, as most people have not interacted face to face with others for longer than they ever had in their life. The workplace is an area that may very well change for the worse. Recently we have seen vast overhauls and complete mindset changes to what makes a productive workplace. From the old claustrophobic cubicles came the new open floor plan and collaborative working tables. These very well may disappear as the new fear of corona may take us right back to the old office layout of cubicles in fear of spreading the virus.

The pandemic has also stirred up large waves of racist sentiment that many through had left the popular opinion years ago. In countries such as the United States and Australia, we have seen a resurgence of anti-asian sentiment both in the media, and in the populace. Videos of people yelling at each other on the bus, hurling insults and slurs at each other, and labels such as Trump attempting to coin the name “Chinese Flu”. (Chandra) These are levels of animosity directed towards others that haven’t been in the spotlight for many years. To have a society fall so quickly into isolation has caused great problems for those who inhabit it.

While the pandemic has caused lots of friction in the world, it seems that many people will be helped by this time in isolation. In such a fast moving world people rarely have time to reflect. This pandemic not only gives people time with their families, but also gives them time with themselves, to both reflect with themselves and get more in touch with their spirituality. Much like St. Teresa turning to the church after the passing of her mother (Cohen 24), This time of isolation, as well as grief for some, can open one’s eyes to both things they may have possibly not known about themselves before and to their spirituality, whatever that may be for each person. And while St. Teresa decided to fully enter the church after she was finished with school, this time for reflection is happening to people of every stage of life. This time of isolation is giving people the space to learn more about themselves than they ever could.

For some people, the Coronavirus pandemic is the biggest event to happen in their lifetime. The world has been flipped on its head, and overnight society has changed for a prolonged duration. On top of what I have experienced personally, I have

watched my family struggle in this time with health concerns. Turning on the news shows nothing but fear and misdirected anger. When we re-emerge into the world from isolation, I can only hope that we will be more mindful. Being isolated for so long will result in a lack of social comfort, but the time that we have spent self-reflecting will benefit us for years to come.

Works Cited

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