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Midterm #2

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We would allow a six-page paper on your reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic. How has it affected you, your family? what do you think the future holds? How does it connect with some of the things you have learned in this class? 6 pages.

The coronavirus has had a profound impact on my life, and the lives of countless others around the world. The past couple of months have been challenging thus far in the United States, thousands have lost their lives and millions have lost their jobs. Additionally, the new reality of social distancing has been difficult to adapt to and I am optimistic that soon things will be back to normal. However, while I do believe things will eventually resume to its previous normalcy, I also believe that in the long run, the effects of this pandemic will have a profound change in the world and our country. Social and political changes will be very prominent in the coming years. While the difficulties surrounding the pandemic are catastrophic, I strongly believe that many of these changes will be for our betterment and will prepare us for future affairs.

I want to begin by reflecting on how the virus has affected my personal life. My family and I are very fortunate to have not lost anyone due to the pandemic, however, it still has had many negative effects on us. Two of my father's, cousins who live in New York, were among the first who exhibited symptoms, and we are certain that they had contracted the virus. Unfortunately, due to the state's lack of preparation and supplies, they were unable to receive testing, and therefore their diagnosis remains unknown. This uncertainty caused a great deal of fear for my family. There are many uncertainties

surrounding the virus, which is very troubling. Fortunately, they have since recovered and we are very grateful that it did not have a tragic end as it did for many families.

Not being able to see my friends and family has been frustrating. Social distancing and having to interact with FaceTime and Zoom calls are very unnatural. Occasionally, I have walked past a relative's home or they have walked past my home to greet each other from a distance. At the early stages of the pandemic, we had to do the shopping for my grandparents who are in their late 60s and early 70s, so they would not leave their house. They had to learn how to use technology in a new way that was never important to them and use new resources such as Instacart to have groceries delivered to them. Fortunately, we live in a time where technology is advanced and is able to bring people together. I come from a tight-knit family and every Friday night we get together and celebrate Shabbat together. I miss these Shabbat dinners very much. Passover celebration was the most challenging for my family this year since we always celebrate it with my grandparents and other family members. Passover night is a time to sit with family members, we read stories of the past to remind us of that once we the Jews were slaves. The Jews were freed from slavery and did not suffer from the plagues that fell upon the people of Egypt. The irony of this year's Passover was that we were all facing a plague and I hope that soon I can be back to celebrating joyous occasions with my family. We ended up having a zoom call with my grandparents and did the prayers together remotely, which helped in creating a sense of community.

Other ways that coronavirus has affected my family's life is that my siblings and I have transitioned to remote learning while my parents have stopped going to work on a

regular basis. My father is an endodontist and in accordance with the California Dental Association, he goes to his office at times to do emergency surgeries, while other nonessential procedures have been limited. While I do enjoy the increased quality time that I have spent with my family, I do miss being at UCLA. I miss interacting with my peers, studying at the libraries, meeting my professors, and learning in a classroom environment.

While coronavirus has been detrimental for so many people, I am optimistic about the future and I believe that as a result, many positive changes will come about. I believe that the coronavirus will make necessary fixes for the United States' democracy going forward. During this pandemic, certain leaders have distinguished themselves and have demonstrated the qualities necessary to lead during such a difficult time. For example, state governors such as Gavin Newsom and Andrew Cuomo have taken bold actions to ensure the safety of their state. Additionally, people have put their trust experts and health professionals who are well versed and knowledgeable on how to combat the virus. This is a move in the right direction since prior to this pandemic, the advice of scientists and other professionals have been ignored for political reasons. I also believe that our democracy will be in better hands for the next term election because people can see what type of person has the proper qualities needed to lead during such a difficult time. Going forward, people will vote for someone based on their leadership qualities, rather than personality and emotional appeals.

Another reason why I speculate America's democracy will benefit is because of the implementation of mail-in voting. The coronavirus has coincided with the presidential

primaries and due to the social distancing guidelines, voting at the ballots is deemed unsafe for the population at large. As a result, mail-in voting has been widely discussed as an alternative. Mail-in voting would benefit the United States' democracy for a variety of reasons. Voter suppression is a major issue for many, and a lot of Americans are unable to vote in person. Mail-in voting would make the voting process easier and everyone would get an equal opportunity to cast their vote. Also, mail-in voting would remove the inconvenience of having to go to the ballot and waiting in line to vote which is an often occurrence and seen many times. If people could vote from the privacy of their homes, then they would be more inclined to cast their vote, and in turn, that would help our democracy. In a democratic country, the will of the people is important, and if not everyone votes, then the country will not be represented as a whole in the end results.

With people having to work from home and doing remote learning, I believe that many will continue to take advantage of this technology. Although there are both pros and cons to this method I feel that working from home is overall beneficial because it provides workers with more flexibility and opportunities. Recently I read an article that talked about how universities may continue the use of remote learning because of the convenience of learning from home. While I do understand the many advantages and conveniences that come from remote learning, and I am not one to resist technological innovation, this reality does trouble me. I would not want remote learning to be the norm for universities because I do not think that technology can replace the value of being in a classroom setting, interacting with your peers, and professors in person.

The existing reality of the coronavirus is comparable to smallpox in the Americas at the time of Christopher Columbus' first voyage. While the effects of the coronavirus on the United States are not nearly as severe as the effect of smallpox on the indigenous populations, comparisons can still be made. Natives were dying at an alarming rate from a disease brought over from Europe, similarly to how coronavirus started elsewhere and overtime spread to the United States and around the world (Ruiz, *Spanish Society*, p. 28).

Historically during difficult times, people tend to scapegoat groups of people and blame them for the issues they are facing. This is a recurring theme in the United States and this form of scapegoating is prevalent during hard times. The September 11 attacks is one of the most tragic events in American history and nearly 3000 died as a result. September 11 was a very difficult day for many Americans and unfortunately, some Americans took their anger and frustration out on minority groups who were not responsible. Racism and racial profiling toward Muslims and Middleeasterns increased following 9/11 and hate crimes toward these groups spiked as well. Prior to the attacks, hate crimes aimed at Muslims were not very common, however, after 9/11 these crimes increased drastically.

Just like the aftermath of 9/11, the coronavirus is putting the United States through tough times once again. The coronavirus originated in Wuhan, China, and as a result, Asians in the United States are receiving the blame. Asian Americans are in no way responsible for the pandemic, and the racism that they are facing is completely unwarranted. Asian Americans have felt a wave of verbal and physical attacks as a

result of the racial targeting some Americans tend to display during dark times. I strongly believe that tough times bring the nation together, but it is also an unfortunate reality that this type of racism does often appear during difficult times.

The racism that Asians are currently facing is similar to that of the Jews in Spain during the Black Death. The Black Death had major impacts on Spain and as a result, most economic activities came to a stop, many villages throughout northern Castile and Catalonia were abandoned, and the ruler of Spain, Alfonso XI died of the plague. The great social unrest that Spain faced during this time led to the scapegoating of the Jews and other religious minorities. Just like how Asians are being targeted because of the coronavirus, Jews faced violence and forced conversions as a result of the Black Death (Ruiz, *Spanish Society*, p. 18-19).

The coronavirus will continue to impact my life and the lives of countless others around the world. Despite the difficulties that this virus has created, I am optimistic that these obstacles will create a better future for all of us. Technology will continue to be utilized for the betterment and will improve the lives of many people. Also, as I touched on previously, I believe that the experiences we are facing now will have a positive impact on American democracy going forward. It is also interesting to observe previous historical events and to relate them to what we are currently facing. While tough times do bring us together as a whole, it is also worth acknowledging how difficult times can lead to the targeting of minority groups. This reality is true now as we face a worldwide pandemic and when studying historical events, examples such as the persecution of the Jews during the Black Death back up this notion.

Works Cited

Ruiz, Teofilo F. *Spanish Society, 1348-1700*. Oxon: Routledge, 2017.