

COVID-19 Through A College Kids Eyes

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The coronavirus pandemic has been the single most globally impacted event to take place in the history of humankind. For the first time in any period in history, the entire world is on hold. Masks on the faces of every individual at the grocery store, purposefully crossing to the other side of the street to get away from an oncoming walker, and millions upon millions of people losing their jobs and their loved ones is pure insanity. There will be nothing again quite like this. As a 21-year-old college kid at UCLA, there is a sense of confusion. Healthwise, I am aware that COVID 19 has a little effect on me. Without any other health complications, it is beyond rare that I could pass away or even feel any effects from this disease. But, there is also a striking sense of this moment being more significant than myself. While the Coronavirus will not kill me, it could very likely kill my parents, siblings with underlying health problems, friends, parents, and the list go on endlessly. In this essay, I will take you into the life of a college kids' experience with Coronavirus as well as the lives of my family members and give you some insight as to the long term possibilities of COVID.

The first time I heard about Coronavirus was in January of 2020. In the following two months, news regarding the virus began to ramp up. The NBA season was canceled after a player (Rudy Gobert) tested positive right before the game, Europe's case/death count surged through the roof, and talks of a US government shut down became extremely likely. The world before we knew it changed forever. In late March, President Trump declared that everyone should quarantine within their houses for two weeks. These two weeks soon turned to a never-ending uncertainty of when the world will reopen, even when I am writing this in May. For me, the quarantine shook up my life tremendously. As a quarter system school, we had just finished our

winter quarter and I had plans of caravanning from San Diego through San Francisco for spring break. Unfortunately, we were ordered to head back home and be isolated from everyone, so that is what I did. I packed my things from UCLA, not knowing when I would ever be back, and went to my parent's home in San Diego. Similar to me, two of my four sisters came back home, one of them leaving Penn State and the other from San Francisco. The first couple of days were refreshing. I was on spring break, so I had no classes, picked up how to make french press coffee, and was able to relax my thoughts. However, after more days which have turned into weeks then months, the daily routine of being cooped up in a home becomes exceptionally monotonous. Television shows become less exciting to gear up for, video games lose their competitive feel, and routines begin to feel like chores. However, we did get The Last Dance Docuseries which was awesome. Besides that it is just the same thing every day. You learn to hate having nothing to do. On top of it, online classes started. Zoom lectures constantly lag out and the motivation to prepare for any graded assignment is minimal. Alongside the overarching thought that students cannot be fully experiencing what it labeled as four of the best years of your life makes it impossible to do anything. I miss being around people. The weirdest thing on top of it all is that everyone is doing the same thing. Whether you are Tom Brady or the local liquor store owner, you are all in the same boat. For me, that thought comforted some of my stressful thoughts. The coronavirus pandemic has also had a profound impact on my career path. As an aspiring sports broadcaster, the halt of everything sports severely limited my ability to pursue this path. Applying for a multitude of spring sports internships as well as offering to take free gigs as a play by play commentator for some high school sports, these all vanished out of thin air. I was planning on utilizing the spring to learn the ropes of the sports broadcasting world.

I felt trapped in my thoughts as I could not figure out how to pursue this passion without the exact thing needed: sports. It has changed how I can approach my career hopes and has altered my ability to attack that industry. I learned that I could not wait for the future to turn my plans into actions because the future is so uncertain. When you have a passion, do not wait for a precise moment to begin pursuing it.

My family has also been drastically affected by the pandemic. My father went skiing in March with four of his 65-year-old buddies and discovered shortly after their trip that his life long friend contracted the deadly virus. He called my father convulsing in pain as he struggled to take long breaths, all described through his frightful tone. For my father, he had an extraordinary amount of thoughts and emotions coursing through his brain. Theories about his best friend, his health, and the well being of his friends and family members with whom he had been in contact. His friend luckily recovered by being prescribed the malaria-hydro chloroquine drug, calling it a “miracle worker.” Those fourteen days were treacherous for everyone in my family. Waking up every morning, mortified by the thought that the virus started its work on anyone in the house, was indescribable. However, after the fourteen days, none of us knowingly had it. We were all okay.

These notable changes in my life due to Coronavirus helped me realize a lot. While the coronavirus pandemic has taken everyone through a whirlwind of changes, this time of nothingness can also be used for growth. Recently, when I have found myself getting frustrated over online schooling or down in the dumps due to my inability to see friends, I realize how disrespectfully selfish that mindset is. People are losing their life long jobs, friends, and family members. I have learned that I should be grateful. Grateful to live. Grateful to experience.

Grateful for every challenge that is thrown my way. Gratitude is what can turn this seemingly life long isolation from others into an experience to grow as an individual. In a world of so much uncertainty, it is foolish to dwell upon the factors you cannot control. It is also silly to think you cannot get things done during this time, except school which is literally impossible. I have been able to make a podcast and garner experience for my future career hopes. I have been able to rekindle my relations with my parents, which can get easily lost through college, and I have been able to become mentally hardened through the experience.

While Coronavirus has ravaged through the globe, other viruses have come before it and demonstrated the brutality of disease. One example of one of these historical events is in Tenochtitlan. In *The Siege of Tenochtitlan*, they describe the scene of smallpox ravaging a city. They mention that “A great plague broke out...the illness was so dreadful that no one could walk or move...a great many died from this plague, and many others died from hunger”.¹ The smallpox outbreak in Tenochtitlan resonated with the pandemic today for multiple reasons. The first reason is the glaringly obvious one: the infection itself. Both COVID and Smallpox quickly spread throughout their areas at an efficient pace that caught the human populations off guard. The quick means of spreading spelled trouble for both the Aztecs and the world today. Secondly, smallpox resonated with the Coronavirus for a lesser realized notion. In the quote I mentioned, they describe that ‘Many others died from hunger.’ Referring to the hunger aspect is vital because it includes the indirect effects of the virus, not just what the virus did to people directly. Indirect effects are paramount in COVID as well. While Coronavirus has impacted the lives of millions through direct pain due to the infection, nearly every person on the globe has suffered

¹ Miguel Leon-Portillo, *The Siege of Tenochtitlan chapter 11 excerpt*, MyUCLA CCLE, 125.

indirectly from it too. Whether it be your business getting shut down, your 401k evaporating due to the melting economy, or the mental stressors that pile on an already anxiety-filled mind, the indirect results are substantial. Personally, most of my suffering from Coronavirus is indirect. I have never felt the impact of the virus on my body. But, I have felt the indirect pains.

The future of Coronavirus is one that does not look certain right now. I believe the government made the right decision to tell people about social distance and isolation, but I would like to introduce some hypotheticals. Two things can result from this long term: togetherness or chaos. The best outcome would be that we realize the mortality rates are way lower than the government says, sports and businesses ramp back up, and the economy begins to lift itself out of the ground as everyone gets to work again. People learned to love each other due to this craziness and set aside many small differences that once existed. We come out of this stronger and more together than when we went in. However, things are not that simple. First, news outlets have utilized COVID to gain viewers and get clicks. On every news outlet, you will see completely different things. One site will say we are on the down turn of the cases of infection and another saying we have not hit a peak. One saying we will soon re open the economy and another saying it could take years. This is so insanely confusing for the nation that no one really knows what the truth is. Also, for the first time in the United States, there is a socialist order in place for most of the country. The first time our government has restricted the citizens with fines for going to the beach, not wearing masks, and other things along with that nature. What if the government decides to keep us in some sort of lockdown forever? What if people choose to revolt against these orders through a civil war or a hostile takeover? Or, what if the Coronavirus stays in our lives forever? What if it continues to mutate and cause constant problems across the

globe? While these hypotheticals stretch beyond the idea of absolute truths, they are still far-out ideas that could take place. My point with these hypotheticals is that no one knows. There is no certainty during this time, and that is a frightening thought. But, if we stay together and realize we can get through this by being grateful for everyday moments, we can come out of this horrible situation better than we went into it. I hope whoever is reading this, whether it be three days from now, three months from now, three years from now or thirty years from now, uses this global experience to sprout. Be grateful for the little things and attack life during all moments. A grateful heart is a magnet for miracles.