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Paper #2: Effects of Coronavirus

In mid February 2020, news of a deadly virus spreading rapidly in China emerged. News broadcasters vaguely covered the disease and little was known about it. All that was being reported was that it was basically the flu. Suddenly schools began shutting down, but my parents seemed unalarmed; thinking schools were overreacting. Los Angeles being a tourist hotspot and with UCLA in the center of it all, I had no doubt the virus would make its way to campus. All across the state, schools and universities closed down and went online. On campus, students were already walking around in masks and teachers had been preparing to switch over to online courses. March 10th, classes switched to online and finals were to be distributed on CCLE. Students began packing their bags and moving back home for who knows how long. Two days later, I moved back home for what I believed to only be 3 weeks.

Nothing seemed to feel real and I felt cheated from a quarter of school. I was disappointed, scared, anxious, and paranoid. I packed my suitcase with clothes that would last for about 2 weeks. I convinced myself that I was going to be coming back for Spring Quarter and everything was going to be back to normal. Now that I was moving home, my parents were now in awe of the panic amidst the disease. It had surmounted unprecedented expectations, in which no one could prepare. One day I was attending school with lectures filled with 400 people and the next, I am trapped inside my home for who knows how long.

Coming home was a humbling experience. Everyone was so used to doing what they wanted when they wanted. There were no necessary precautions to even go outside. Now I can't go to the store without wearing a mask or gloves. My liberties have been taken away for the greater good of humankind. Paranoia quickly set in after a few days in quarantine. My parents decided to avoid going to the store altogether and thought it best to order groceries online. When the groceries got delivered, my mom came up with a system to clean and wipe down every piece of food before putting it away in our fridge. My first thought was that my mom had reached a new level of paranoia, but in reality these are the necessary precautions that need to be taken. When my sister lost her job, it finally hit me the severity of all these events. I realized with everything closing, employers are not able to afford to pay employees and therefore must get laid off.

Unemployment skyrocketed, the stock market crashed, nurses are looking for blood donors, there are meat shortages, and food banks have begun to run dry. Commercials quickly changed to advertising their delivery services whereas other companies played a somber ballad on the piano with messages of hope. Celebrities suddenly felt the urge to start singing to us. The words "quarantine" and "social distancing" became headlines on the news; words I was not familiar with. Toilet paper and paper towels vanished from the shelves. No one can find flour. In this frenzy, people are buying excess goods. Some are stocking up as if it were truly the end of the world. Others are price gouging online to take advantage of the desperate and panicked people. Lines wrap around stores in which everyone is covered in masks, gloves, and standing 6 feet apart waiting for their turn to get a chance to go inside the store. The roads are eerily empty and yet Starbucks lines are longer than ever.

After two months in quarantine, I officially moved out of my dorm back at school and there is no word on if I will be returning in the fall. I have not seen any of my friends since I left school in week nine. I have seen my grandma only three times in which I spoke to her through a window and dropped off her groceries. I haven't gone anywhere without a mask on and I wash my hands for at least twenty seconds if I dare go outside. But I guess this has become our "new normal." In a way, though, this whole experience has given me perspective. Being able to slow down and not take the little things for granted, it helped me realize what's actually important. It is crazy that all of us are sitting inside dreaming of the day we can go hug a family member, friend, or even a stranger at this point. I miss human interaction, I miss being able to go where I want without wearing protective gear or fear.

In light of all this darkness, there is humanity. Neighborhood streets are filled with friendly neighbors you never knew you had. People are willing to help one another and look out for each other's health and well-being. This coming togetherness has created a safe beacon and gives hope for the future to come. It's beautiful to see the camaraderie between one another and the willingness to help a friend, family member or complete stranger. Social media has helped make humor of the situation and make people laugh through videos or memes. Within homes, families are spending time together; eating dinner, watching tv, and laughing. People are more dependent on technology for work, school, and staying connected as things have turned all online. Because human interaction has been taken away, there seems to be a revitalization of classic communication and human interaction. Many of us have gotten used to having technology as our source of communication, but human contact is what people now crave. They have begun to realize the monotony of facetimeing, or texting that others have been trying to

escape prior to the pandemic. During this time, it is the smaller things that have given us a sense of inner peace and comfort for the future.

The chaos going on in the human world has brought beauty back to nature. The skies have opened as clouds of pollution are swept away. The air smells and feels fresher. There's still the quiet hum of electricity, but at night the crickets, owls, and dogs sing in the night. The little light pollution now shows the night sky. Wildlife has begun to reclaim its lost territory to man. Birds, bears, deer, mountain lions are strolling around towns in hunt for food and reemerging to see their habitats slowly grow back due to the lack of less human foot traffic on the mountain trails. In Italy, Venice canals have cleared, bringing in dolphins and other sea life. The water is clear, fresh, and healthy once again. This quarantine has emphasized the negative impact humans have made on animal and plant life habits. We have grown ignorant of the simple things that we have practiced over time which change their way of life. Because of quarantine, people should begin to take seriously the effects of our actions on the environment and look for ways in which can create a healthier space for all walks of life.

The polarizing environment of both the nation and the world has been strengthened due to the coronavirus. Various news broadcasters are fighting one another about what President Trump is doing right or wrong or the flaws in Governor Newsoms policy. These are unprecedented times to which no one knows the best way to handle. No matter what move they make they get criticized. There is no national unity. News channels fit information to support their political opinions, creating a disconnect among American people. Because COVID-19 has affected every aspect of life, the US and the world needs to collectively band together for the sake of humanity. The redundancy of the news makes for a dreary audience, which we grow old

of the same, unchanging news. Across the nation we see countless racist attacks against Chinese people and countless strikes. Officials have tried to shift blame away from their own ignorance and blame it on China for lying about the severity of the disease. Racist actions have been taken because people want someone or something to blame. Strikes sweep across the nation as desperate business owners are trying to bring money in. There is a disregard for law enforcement officers as people fail to comply with stay-at-home orders or gather in groups without protection. Because of their forced confinement, issues with mental health have begun to increase. The negative impacts of COVID-19 are vast and will have long lasting effects on the way we live our lives. Hopefully, individuals, states, and nations will learn from how they handle themselves in difficult situations.

The events of history often repeat themselves. In regards to the effects of coronavirus, we are able to draw similarities from the spread of disease upon Spanish arrival into the New World. COVID-19 spread rapidly and many were ignorant of the threat it posed to their health and safety. Although it has not wiped out entire generations like the smallpox disease, COVID has taken the lives of thousands of people. Similar to the indigenous people, there was no known cure at the time to solve this disaster. The native people in the Caribbean had no knowledge of what was going on nor did they have the resources to protect themselves. The native people were innocent in the spread of disease due to their lack of information, the communication barriers, no medicine, and the lack of cooperation with the Spanish conquistadors to help them fight the disease. Rather, it was our ignorance and lack of compliance that led to the rapid spread of the disease, however this has become a universal effort to end the virus and a global community has emerged to navigate together through COVID. The paranoia the diseases of the Columbian

Exchange fostered is similar to the paranoia that has surfaced from COVID-19. It is the unknown and the unseen that amplified the fear in both the 15th century and in current times. Like the indigenous people, we are afraid to live our lives respectively and in times we venture out it is simply not like before.

The events of coronavirus have completely altered human interaction. It has taken away precious time, memories, experiences, friends, and family. Although people are trying to make due with our present situation, we are all eagerly awaiting to be together again. The world has stopped and remains still until life can continue again. During this time, it is reclaiming its lost land and nature's beauty is being restored. This waiting period has restored the family home with warmth and generosity, yet the outside world has continued to fall victim to horrendous acts of racism and ignorance. As a result, my hopes are that the world reemerges united and learns from these experiences in order to better prepare for future times of distress.