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History 129A

18 May 2020

The Implications of Covid-19

During the reign of the Catholic Monarchs Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II they would finance Christopher Columbus's expedition in 1492. Columbus would sail and eventually stumble upon land inhabited by various indigenous people. Rather than coming to this land with offerings, the Spanish would gift the indigenous people various horrible viruses that would devastate the native population. These natives were met with diseases ranging from smallpox to measles and the viruses were deadly due to the natives immunodeficiencies. The introduction of these viruses changed the lives of all indigenous people, that came into contact, regardless if they contracted the viruses or not. Many lost their lives, lost loved ones, and lost their way of living. By no means am I suggesting that within the 21st century I am experiencing the loss and impact similar to the Indigenous people in the 15th century but I am suggesting that a Virus has changed aspects in my life, those I love, and society at large. The pandemic, COVID-19, drastically changed our society in every way possible. It changed the way we socially interact, the economy, minimized resources, and took the lives of many. As for my experience during the pandemic, COVID-19 has impacted many aspects within myself, the lives of those I love, my college community, and has increased the uncertainty I have of not only my future but the future of our country. No matter the time period a virus greatly impacts the people and changes their lives entirely.

Before the pandemic, I have been struggling with truly understanding who I am and what I want for myself. I have worked extremely hard to be accepted into UCLA and stayed up long hours just to make sure that I was successful in each course at my community college. When transferring, I was filled with excitement and eagerness because the next years would lead me towards my future that I thought was right for me. Yet when starting in fall at UCLA I found myself questioning my identity, enrollment, and overall academic choices. Each class felt that I did not belong and the major I choose was the incorrect decision. These feelings continued on my entire junior year and I began to fall into a state of depression because I felt that there was no way to correct my situation. Every idea that I came up with to correct what was occurring would only be met with opposition or fail. I attempted to change my major, transfer schools, and pick up a minor but nothing seemed to work. On top of this, I do not receive support from my immediate family since they would be disappointed in my decision to withdraw from UCLA. Rather, I am faced with anger and constant questioning about the decisions that I am making within my life. Essentially, I am stuck in a box and have nowhere to turn because I am fearful of letting down those that helped me the most to get to where I am today. There is simply just immense pressure on me to be successful since I am a first-generation college student, the oldest sibling, and come from a low-income family.

Just a week before we were advised to move out of the dorms due to COVID-19 I began to schedule appointments to meet with therapists to discuss my depression. I knew that speaking to someone that was unbiased and would listen rather than a lecture would be beneficial in figuring out what I need to do next. Yet due to the regulations that were put into place by the government, I was unable to obtain an official meeting. As a result, I moved back home, and it is

still extremely difficult to have a meaningful conversation with my parents because I am still met with the same anger. This pandemic has limited my ability to seek professional help in discussing and discovering how to overcome my depression. Although I am blessed to have a home to come back to, it is difficult to fully dedicate time to myself to resolve my issue since I live in a home where I am depended on. Having a large family is a beautiful thing but when your family of eight is living in a small home it makes things very difficult. When you are expected to watch all your younger siblings, attend lectures, dedicate time for academic work, and still have time for your mental health it makes it nearly impossible to complete all without sacrificing one. Even though I struggled at school, I still was able to create a safe space for myself and dedicate time so that I could work on my mental health. Also, I was able to create an intimate support group of friends in which we would meet up to discuss how we are doing but since the Stay at Home Order was enacted and fears of contracting the virus grew, I am no longer able to meet with this group. Yes, we are fully capable to communicate virtually but it makes it very difficult to do so since many of us have new responsibilities, situations, and schedules. In addition, since I live with a large family it makes it difficult to be able to leave for a short period of time since it is highly recommended to stay home since we want to minimize the spread of the virus and I would never want my family to contract it. Yet again I am still trapped in my box with little way of overcoming my situation. This pandemic has only resulted in the accumulation of new issues that perpetuated my depressed state and added more anxiety about what my new future will look like. However even though this virus has impacted me as an individual, it has also placed immense fear and uncertainty amongst my family.

Since the government recognized how quickly this virus spreads, they began to close all businesses that were deemed nonessential. Where my father works falls under this category of being nonessential and as a result he was forced to file for unemployment. The federal government has made strides to provide funding for many unemployed, such as the stimulus check, but since my father is the sole income earner it is not enough to pay all the family expenses. After realizing that they will constantly be short money each month it has put constant stress on both my parents. Also, since mass hysteria consumed the public much of the food resources, cleaning supplies, and home resources were quickly cleared off the shelves making it extremely difficult for my parents to find supplies. Both my parents and I have each gone to various stores just to search for necessities but are often never able to find what we need.

Once my parents learned of the virus and how it impacts the body, they both became fearful of contracting it. This is because both my parents have health conditions that make them more susceptible to contracting the virus. My father has type two diabetes and hypertension which he has been struggling with since I was a child. My mother in 2007 was forced to have her thyroid surgically removed in order to prevent cancer growing within this area and as a result, weakens her immune system. Knowing how dangerous the virus truly is both my parents have completely isolated themselves from all my family which they would have never done in the past since they constantly visit their parents and other family. To them being with their family and ensuring the safety of their parents, and grandparents are a huge priority since there are growing older. Aside from my parents, this virus has impacted my outside family such as my great grandmother and uncles. My great grandmother is 96 years old and is constantly walking at parks, traveling with my uncle to visit Los Angeles, and attended various events since she refuses

to stay in the home all day because she is aware that her time will end soon. She constantly told us growing up, “The moment you stop moving is when you are ready to die” and she refuses to let that happen so soon. But since it is mandatory to stay at home and all her favorite events are canceled, she is forced to be at home. The family has begun to notice that my great grandmother has been visibly weaker and depressed. Everyone is fearful that her time will be ending soon and none of us will be able to spend time with her. She has played a large role in everyone’s lives within the family so to lose her unexpectedly without being able to see her one last time would devastate everyone.

Our uncles as well have been greatly impacted since they both are essential works. My Uncle Raymond works for the DMV and due to many within the office testing positive for COVID-19 they were forced to close down. This has impacted my uncle since he is nervous that he may have been exposed and be a possible carrier of the virus. Thankfully he has tested negative, but it continues to scare my uncle that he could contract it and pass it to my great grandmother since he is here caregiver. Another uncle to be greatly impacted by the pandemic is my Uncle Anthony that is a surgical technician at Kaiser Permanente. My uncle is at the front lines of the pandemic since many patients are treated at the hospital he works at. Each day he goes in he fears that he will contract the virus and will put him out of work. This fear became a reality when he learned that he was exposed to an individual that tested positive for COVID-19. Thankfully he did not test positive, but he continues to be paranoid that one day he can receive this virus. Not only have my family been impacted but the community I identify with has been impacted as well.

College students across the country are impacted by the virus since we are unable to receive in-person education. I recognize that it is a privileged opportunity to have access to higher education such as what students receive at UCLA and I am forever grateful. At the same time, many students are paying large amounts of money and taking loans just to be able to afford this education. For the amount of money students pay, the online education they are receiving is not adequate. Many students are forced to return home to an environment that is not suitable for them to succeed in their education. Fortunately, students have the capability to acclimate to their situation and will be successful in their endeavors but of course, this will take time for the community to adjust.

It is uncertain what exactly the future holds as time passes since new information on the virus continues to be discovered. What is certain is that society will never be the same since we are changing into a new world. A world that will be split between those that emphasize the importance of cleanliness and social distancing versus those that refuse to acknowledge the importance. Even when writing this paper our economy and unemployment rate continues to be harmed by the impact of COVID-19. If this continues, I believe that we will experience a recession and newly graduated college students will be significantly impacted because of the lack of job opportunities. Most importantly I predict that a large social movement will occur that focuses on racial discrimination within the United States. Although movements have been already occurring, within the timespan of this pandemic we have witnessed a substantial amount of discrimination towards people of color. Such as violent harassment from law enforcement towards people of color when protesting racial issues versus the privileged treatment towards the White community in Hunting beach that was protesting the Stay at Home Order because it was

viewed as an infringement upon their constitutional rights. With the accumulation of instances of injustice and the power of social media, I believe that this will fuel and create a larger movement that will sweep that nation. Overall, our country and world will not be the same. As a country, we must continue monitoring and preparing for what is to come after we have successfully overcome this pandemic.

Works Cited

Ruiz, Teofilo F. Spanish Society 1348-1700. Taylor & Francis, 2017.