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### The Profound Impact of COVID-19

The discussion of COVID-19 and how it will impact the world for years to come is complex and unending, full of uncertainty, worry, and potentially hope for the future. It is the topic that consumes thoughts and has permeated the psyche and culture of the entire globe in a way that has never been seen. It will be remembered in the future as a defining point in the Earth's history, although how the world will change remains to be seen. It's a fascinating topic and its very important to look both to the history of pandemics as well as the lives of individuals today and acknowledge that despite the massive and long-lasting impact COVID will have on society and culture at large, it is not the only thing that is impacting lives. My personal experience of COVID is marred by past traumas that have contributed to the stress of the situation as well as worry for what the future holds as I finish my undergraduate career at UCLA. It is an honor to be able to have my perspective of the pandemic archived so one day I may look back at this time and see how the world has progressed.

This history class provides a unique opportunity to connect all aspects of health, society, and history that make up my perspective of the COVID-19 pandemic in what is hopefully a semi-coherent essay. It has been quite therapeutic to sit down and ruminate on how the pandemic has affected my life and how personal experiences have shaped how I view the

world at large. The history of pandemics is extensive and gives insight into the possible routes we as a society will follow as well as improvement to society and major changes in culture that may result from this global crisis. From Edward Jenner's groundbreaking smallpox vaccine to John Snow's famous water pump experiments, history is full of great science. The public health aspect describes many groundbreaking vaccines and measurers we use today resulted from crises. This does provide a degree of optimism about how the stress of the situation can lead to meaningful changes. We are more motivated than ever to put our collective minds together to find meaningful solutions to this pandemic. There, of course, is the history of the massive destruction caused by global pandemics that facilitated these changes. The indigenous peoples of the Americas were absolutely devastated by smallpox and other diseases introduced by colonists of Europe. More recent history demonstrated how a history of colonization of less developed countries has lead to a lack of accessible healthcare and infrastructure that has led to recent endemic diseases such as Ebola and Zika in less developed countries. This causes worries about how the governments of the Earth will prioritize the healthcare of its individual citizens rather than the health of the world at large. While there are worries about selfishness and the hoarding of supplies and information, the hope is that humanity prevails, and we will be all the better for it.

Whether a global event, or personal trauma, loss of life can have a lasting impact both personally and within a community. Parallels can be drawn between the modern COVID-19 crisis and the spread of vicious diseases in North and South America in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In both cases, globalization and travel facilitated the rapid spread of disease and devastation, drastically changing the global culture. In the America's the indigenous peoples

we nearly wiped out by awful diseases they were not prepared to cope with. Their entire way of life was forever changed due to the distinct power imbalance seen between the colonizers of the old world and the natives of the new world. The major difference lies in the fact that COVID-19 has never been endemic to a population as seen in smallpox, syphilis, and other diseases spreading during the meeting of the old and new world. It is entirely novel and as such, no country has any major advantage over the other in regards to time to prevent the spread of disease. Despite the massive expansion of globalization seen in our current time, the question still remains: how can we effectively communicate ideas and information across the globe in an open and meaningful way? How can we convince a globe full of individuals to work together effectively to stop the spread of such a devastating disease. I am of the opinion that this could be the greatest achievement of our generation, our great public health breakthrough that fundamentally change how we deal with disease.

Moving to the personal impact the virus has had on my life, the most unfortunate aspect of the COVID pandemic is the startling and sad realization that knowledge doesn't always provide comfort and reassurance. I have spent my years at UCLA studying molecular biology, training my mind to be analytical and realistic, strictly adhering to the scientific method and as such, I have the unfortunate insight the specifics of how this virus works, how long it will take to create a vaccine and the extensive timeline that goes along with treating an entire planet of people at risk. I know the systematic global biases that will favor certain groups of people and countries and I feel absolutely helpless. The eternal optimism in me hope that I am completely wrong and that the world will come together, that we will come out of this better, unified, but pessimism taunts me, will the world just be that much worse at the end of this?

This pandemic has forced me to look at the world in a jaded manner and it is something that I truly dislike the most about this whole situation. I want to look at the world in a positive, forward thinking manner, but with no end in sight, I am finding it increasingly hard to look to the future for optimism.

As terrible as it sounds, COVID-19 isn't even the worst thing that has happened to me in the past year and it is most certainly not the worst thing that will happen to me in my lifetime. Late in 2019, my maternal grandparents, whom I loved very much, passed away within a week of each other. It was devastating and profoundly changed my world and the world of my family. This occurred during my senior year of college and at the same time I was applying to law school and finishing critical classes for my major. During this time, I was exposed to profound kindness and hurtful apathy, from professors who were extremely sympathetic to those who didn't care to respond to emails explaining my lack of focus in class. It changed my perspective of how people view those in their life and how they choose to treat others in time of grief and sadness. The sadness, stress and worry had not abated by the time the world was thrown into chaos by a primordial strand of DNA packaged into a double enveloped membrane protein known as COVID-19. These two events, though both formative, could not be more different. COVID-19 has impacted every single person in this world and it is my hope that it will inspire further empathy rather than apathy moving forward. It serves to demonstrate that despite people going through completely different experiences, the thoughts and emotions can be quite similar and it is important to realize everyone is going through their own personal experiences that impact how they view the world, their thoughts and emotions.

Overall, there is so much that goes into analyzing COVID-19 and how it effects the globe, from countries, to communities, to families to the indivial. It can be looked at from a historical perspecitve, a public health perspective, and in any number of ways. History has a why of helping us to not repeat our mistakes as well as provide a level of optimism that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that the globe can come together and make meaningful and profound changes for the overall betterment of society. It is very easy to fall into a trap of sadness and despair, but I do sincerely hope that the long lasting changes caused by this global pandemic will be for the positive and can eventually improve the world at large.