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Covid-19 Reflection

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has truly been an unprecedented event, impacting the lives of all throughout the world. It is believed that the coronavirus originated in China's Hubei province around December of 2019, and has since spread rapidly to every continent except for Antarctica. The United States is currently the epicenter of the pandemic, with over 1 million confirmed cases and over 80,000 deaths. However, countries such as Brazil and Russia have growing numbers of cases and deaths as well. Although it is a household name by now, the coronavirus still remains somewhat of a mystery to scientists and medical professionals due to the diversity it displays with regards to symptoms and symptom severity. The incredibly rapid spread of the virus has also been puzzling, as many people carry the virus without showing any symptoms, causing asymptomatic transmission. In this reflection, I will discuss the significant economic, political, and social impacts the coronavirus pandemic has had and will have on the United States and other countries around the world, and will also try to discuss the personal impact the virus continues to have on my own life. I will also attempt to draw similarities between the events of the coronavirus pandemic and the outbreak of epidemics in the New World brought about by Castilian expansion.

I would like to begin my reflection by describing the incredibly complex ways the coronavirus pandemic has impacted my life and the lives of my relatives. As a collegiate tennis

player, my daily schedule was packed with practices and fitness sessions, along with my regular class schedule. Being a collegiate tennis player also entailed a large amount of travel, as many of our competitive matches were held at different campuses across the nation. The outbreak of the coronavirus, however, completely altered what I had perceived to be the normal daily life of a college tennis player. In mid-March, Pac-12 and the NCAA announced the immediate suspension of our season. What was interesting about this suspension process was its incredibly sudden and abrupt nature, as news of the cancellation reached our team just hours before our match against USC. Just days after the cancellation of our season, the athletic committee announced the suspension of all practice and fitness sessions for all teams. This coincided with the announcement by the university to move all Spring Quarter classes to online platforms. As a result of these decisions, I began moving all of my belongings from my apartment near campus to my house in Glendale, California. Ever since these events, I have been conducting my studies through online portals and have been forced to stay at home throughout the whole day. This alteration has not only completely changed the nature of my academic studies, but has also forced me to suspend my tennis training. Following the imposition of the stay-at-home orders, all public facilities and parks containing tennis courts have been shut down indefinitely. Since I have been playing tennis since I was seven years old, the suspension of training has been a completely new and different experience, as I am forced to find new ways to keep up my physical shape.

The coronavirus pandemic has also had a significant impact on the lives of my parents, as it has created uncertainty in regards to their business practice. My parents own and operate their own business and, during the initial stages of the outbreak in the United States, were forced to

completely shut down all operations. After the initial outbreak, local government officials repealed some of the restrictions, which allowed my parents to resume operations. However, a conflict has emerged between the safety of restarting their business and the loss of profits incurred by continuing to remain shut down. Various other relatives who own and operate their own private businesses have also been struggling with this dilemma. The complex and multifaceted question of the decision to open up businesses can be seen across the whole country, as there have been calls by private business owners to ease restrictions and reopen several sectors of the economy, even though many local and state officials have reiterated their cautious stance of keeping the majority of the country on lockdown. These conflicts have resulted in a wave of anti-lockdown protests by individuals in many states, including California, and have highlighted the unprecedented circumstances caused by the pandemic.

As previously mentioned, the coronavirus pandemic has created a very difficult economic situation across the nation, with the interests of private business owners clashing with the interests of leading government and health officials. However, the catastrophic economic impact of the coronavirus has not been limited to the United States, but has extended to the global economy. Economies all around the world, such as the European Union, have witnessed unprecedented economic decline due to the coronavirus pandemic, largely because of the rapid decline in consumerism and stock market prices. The consequences of this global recession are very serious, with continued lockdown measures in several countries threatening to destroy businesses and greatly harm employment opportunities. We are already seeing some of these effects, as unemployment rates have reached historic highs in various countries, such as the United States, and several high-profile businesses have filed for bankruptcy. More personally, as

a California resident, the economic contraction brought about by coronavirus pandemic has the potential to greatly harm my future chances of employment. During such periods of contraction, businesses will try to reduce costs in order to cut losses, leading to waves of increased unemployment. As a result, most businesses during this period will not be looking to hire new employees, which might pose difficulties for me in trying to find employment opportunities.

The coronavirus pandemic has also inflated the existing polarization of the American political system. Throughout the Trump presidency, the United States has been deeply divided along political lines, with conservatives and liberals continuously clashing on most political issues. The coronavirus pandemic has elevated this polarization to greater heights, with both sides of the political spectrum clashing on the actual severity of the virus, along with the nature of the stay-at-home orders. Conservatives have argued that the stay-at-home orders are unconstitutional and infringe upon the rights of the citizens, especially for a virus with a low death rate. On the other hand, liberals have insisted on the necessity to impose stay-at-home orders to stop the spread of the virus from overwhelming healthcare facilities across the country. With 2020 being a presidential election year in the United States, the coronavirus can have serious consequences in terms of voting, the election process, and the campaign process. On a more global level, the coronavirus pandemic has affected political systems across the world, with many countries being forced to suspend legislative activities and reschedule elections. Numerous politicians have also become infected with the virus, most notably British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. These effects have had, and may continue to have, serious consequences when it comes to implementing economic and social measures in response to the pandemic and the processes of reopening these countries.

The social consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have been incredibly complex and far reaching. In the United States, the rapid influx of hospitalizations due to the coronavirus has put a large amount of stress on our healthcare services. Hospitals across the country, especially those in New York, have been filled to capacity and are struggling to provide the equipment necessary to their patients. This impact can be seen on a global scale, as countries who are not able to contain the first wave of outbreaks are forced to work at maximum capacity. In addition to the physical toll of the pandemic, mental health has also been greatly affected. Countries around the world have been forced to enact lockdown measures to try and stop the spread of coronavirus, causing unintended consequences on the mental health of many. Anxiety, fear, and paranoia due to the uncertainty of the virus have inflicted a sense of mental instability in people across the world. Additionally, lockdown measures have created conflicts within households, causing an increase in domestic violence in countries such as the United States. At the same time, however, the coronavirus pandemic has influenced the improvement of global healthcare systems, as these unprecedented times have forced governments around the world to create more accessible healthcare services.

Throughout the entirety of the pandemic, I have realized the importance of unity and cohesion in our society, and how a greater focus on individualism and protectionism has hampered it. Human society functions at its best when we are all united and focused on common goals. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of this behavior, as the gradual increase in the severity of the virus since its inception late last year can be attributed to our lack of cohesion as a society. Various individuals, business owners, and governments around the

world were hesitant to temporarily undertake sacrifices to try and prevent the spread of the virus, causing it to spiral into a global pandemic.

I would like to end my reflection on the coronavirus pandemic by discussing its relation with the various diseases brought by the Europeans to the New World. When Christopher Columbus and the Castilians first discovered the islands of the Caribbean in 1492, they brought with them a host of different kinds of diseases, such as smallpox, which the indigenous people were not immune to. This resulted in an epidemic that decimated the native populations of the islands. Shortly after discovering the Caribbean islands, the Castilians used the islands as a launching pad for the invasion of Mexico. The Castilian conquistador Hernán Cortés led a coalition of native forces and defeated the Aztecs in 1521. Whilst a formidable force with his alliances, Cortes would have never been able to defeat the Aztecs without smallpox, which ravaged the Aztecs and greatly weakened their fighting capabilities (Ruiz lecture 4/22). Although the coronavirus is significantly less deadly than smallpox, the rapid spread of the coronavirus is similar to the rapid spread of smallpox we see during the Castilian conquests of Mexico and the Caribbean. By looking back at the history of disease and its impact on human civilizations, we can use extremely valuable information, such as disease symptoms, treatments, and forms of spread, to help guide use through this unprecedented pandemic.