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### Living in a COVID-19 World

It was not until early March of 2020 that the novel coronavirus made its impact on the UCLA community. Until then, I had only read and heard about the virus being a problem in other countries. After a sequence of emails from UCLA's Chancellor Gene Block, my roommates and I were shocked to learn that the rest of our classes for winter quarter were to be done online. Little did we know that this would only be a brief introduction to a new world that we were about to live in. Within a matter of days we were told to go home and be with our families, unsure of when we might return. As I write this paper some two months later, there is still no plan on a possible return to Los Angeles. The United States has unfortunately found a way to politicize any plans for the future, dividing the American public when we should be coming together. Large portions of the country have begun to reopen and return to normal life, while others are forced to shelter and wait. Frustration and depression consume millions across the world. The death count in the U.S. continues to rise each day, and is now close to 90,000. It is a very dark time in the history of the world, and one that will have lasting impact on communities for a long time.

I was born and raised in Orange County California, about an hour's drive south of Westwood. My parents had my little sister and I return home from college before the virus truly began to spread so that we would not bring it home to them. Both my mom and dad are above sixty years old and wanted to make sure that we would not pose any risk to them. I am fortunate to come from a family that can financially endure some of the burdens that the virus entails on so

many families during this time. Even though the store that my mom worked at got shut down, my dad has been able to cover any expenses. Because my parents take things so seriously, they have decided to order our groceries to our house, so that we do not have to go into crowded stores. Having this privilege has made our lives much easier and much more reassuring. It is saddening to think about the families that are having a hard time affording groceries to begin with, let alone pay extra to have them delivered. I am thankful that the virus has yet to negatively affect my family the way it has to so many others'. The coronavirus became a much stronger reality when a family friend had to go to our local hospital to address his shortness of breath. He was forced to go on a ventilator and was given the drug remdesivir in order to fight off the virus. After hearing about his traumatic experience, I feel like my parents became even more cautious and avoided leaving the house.

Each night at home my family and I would sit down and watch the news after dinner. For two straight months, we watched coronavirus numbers climb globally. While some countries began to recover, others continued to be hit hard. Seeing Italy struggle to such a large extent brought great fear to my family. We constantly wondered whether or not parts of our country would be hit to a similar extent. The areas surrounding Los Angeles and Orange County, the area in which we live, are densely populated with millions of people traveling to and from. Compared to other large cities, Los Angeles and Orange County have done relatively well. Specifically, Orange County only has 4,000 coronavirus cases, with a population of over 3 million people. Thankfully, the town that I live in, Lake Forest, has only had thirty total cases. The majority of southern California has done a good job of flattening the curve and limiting the burden on our healthcare system. Most of our hospitals have not reached full capacity, and healthcare workers

have not had to deal with an overwhelming number of patients. On the contrary, the northeastern United States has had a much different experience. My parents are from Long Island New York and all of my relatives live there as well. New York City and Long Island have been the worst hit parts of the United States, but thankfully my grandma, aunts and uncles have all stayed safe. My grandpa passed away last year at the veteran's home in Stony Brook New York last year from natural causes. He lived a great life, and my mom and her family are somewhat happy he did not have to experience this pandemic. That same Stony Brook Hospital and veteran's home has been shown on CNN a few times while we were watching, providing a brief moment of remembrance for my family.

I have used this period in which I am quarantining with my family to enjoy myself and improve my lifestyle. When I first got home, my little sister and I did not necessarily get along. Over the course of the next few months we began to get closer and closer and now we enjoy spending time with each other. I have helped her get into a workout routine in our garage, and she has given me some fun TV shows to watch with one another. I am really thankful to have spent this time with her and hope to continue to improve our friendship. This quarantine has also given me the opportunity to slow my life down and focus on things that are important. I have much more time to do school work, attend lectures on my own, and read course materials. This gives me more time to read on my own and learn new skills. I will be graduating in the spring of 2021, and hoping to begin a career in sports marketing. Being at home has given me the opportunity to learn how to use and create spreadsheets, a skill that I will need in the future. The hardest part about not leaving my house is not being able to see my girlfriend. She has heart disease and is in a higher risk category when it comes to the virus. I hope to see her in June for

the first time in months. This summer I was planning on taking an in person internship course through UCLA for sports business, but the virus has now forced it to be offered online. I will have to adjust and make the most of this new experience as I hope to build relationships and find a way into the industry.

This pandemic has impacted almost every region, country, and community across the world. It is likely the first time in human history that we all have one common goal, and share one common enemy. The vaccine for COVID-19 will be sought after by medical professionals, scientists, and philanthropists all over the world. It is fascinating to see and read about the efforts made to find potential treatments and remedies to this virus. One study I read talked about smokers in Italy having a lower chance of contraction due to the nicotine in their blood (Quinn, 2020). Other articles I have read talk about Bill Gates funding labs and buildings in order to mass produce potential vaccines. It is extraordinary the amount of money he will put towards producing vaccines that will likely never work, just for the possibility that one might prevail (Hamilton, 2020). This pandemic has created a very trying period in the history of mankind, but also a period in which we will see great medical advancements, as well as important societal adjustments. Businesses have been forced to operate remotely, and restaurants now must provide takeout or delivery options in order to survive. It is going to be difficult to see a scenario in which public fitness centers, movie theaters, and other venues are filled with large numbers of people.

It is shocking to see how much the American public varies in their response to this virus. Large parts of the country have begun to resume their lives as if nothing ever happened. In parts of Texas and Wisconsin, people are going to bars without wearing protective masks with zero

regards for social distancing. At the same time, a Los Angeles public health official recommended continuing the stay at home order for three more months! I do not understand how parts of the United States can differ so greatly from one another. Regardless of community, we all must learn to act and live in a way that prevents another outbreak. There is no reason we cannot be more conscious about hygiene and respect for others' spaces. It is expected that universities will offer the option for online classes for the foreseeable future. I hope that there will be a combination of in person and online students for each class so that lecture halls and discussion spaces will not be filled to capacity. UCLA students from across the world will now have a unique opportunity to continue their education from home, and I believe that large numbers of them will use this to avoid the cost of housing in Westwood. Private and expensive universities with less of an academic reputation will be affected very negatively by this virus. If COVID-19 lingers into the fall, families are not going to want to pay for such an expensive education without the in person experience.

There have been countless epidemics throughout the history of the world, with similar characteristics to COVID-19. The 1918 Pandemic is regarded as one of the most severe and deadly pandemics across time, accounting for about 50 million deaths worldwide. A third of the world's population is believed to have contracted the virus between 1918 and 1919 (Centers for Disease Control, 2019). One unique aspect to this pandemic was the high mortality rate in younger and healthier individuals. This seems to be the opposite of the coronavirus, which appears to create a high risk for older individuals. Even with this difference, measures to resolve and diminish both pandemics are very similar. There were no pharmaceutical options in 1919, and doctors have yet to develop one for COVID in 2020. Responses to both viruses have

involved isolation, social distancing, and long periods of quarantine. In the 1600s, European settlers brought smallpox to North America, killing over 70% of the Native American population (Healthline Editorial, 2018). In this case, a vaccine was created over a hundred years later, granting immunity from the disease.

It is still unknown when a vaccine will be created for the coronavirus, but themes from past pandemics can be seen today. Economic decline has occurred in countries all over the world due to the closing of businesses and the loss of jobs. Social chaos is another theme that is present in pandemics, but one that is not necessarily affecting the American population today. There are protesters of shelter in place and large numbers of individuals pushing to return to their normal lives, but the majority of this country's citizens have done their part in flattening the curve and limiting the spread. I am fairly proud of the response of my friends and family. Staying inside, not going to work, and limiting our social lives takes a lot of restraint and discipline. I have a great appreciation for those in my community that have obeyed orders of social distancing so that nurses and other medical professionals have not been overwhelmed in my area. My message to the future would be that I hope we continue to come together as a community and make sacrifices for the benefits of others. Like the pandemics, wars, and other disasters of the past, there will always be obstacles that challenge our individual freedoms. It is important that we do whatever it takes to respond and grow through these challenges for those around us.

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