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### What COVID-19 Means For Me

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a strain on global health, economies, and social lives. It hit the United States a few months ago and is still in full force in this month of May 2020. This pandemic has negatively affected me emotionally and physically, created stress for my family, and has created a divide in my community. I am not optimistic about the near future and I predict that this pandemic will last into at least 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has similarities to the 16th century New World smallpox pandemic, however the effects and reactions have differed greatly on the human population.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected me in several ways, especially emotionally. To begin, I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression five years ago. The lockdown orders have kept me inside and kept me away from my friends, which has augmented the anxiety and depression. For example, one of the symptoms of clinical depression is oversleeping. My routine the past two months has consisted of 9 hours of sleep per night with approximately a 3 hour nap in the afternoon. This has caused me to feel more and more tired everyday. Although the oversleeping is the reason behind my exhaustion, taking a nap in the afternoon is one of the sole sources of entertainment at home. Taking a nap is the most effective way to avoid my responsibilities, such as schoolwork. I often spend the morning feeling overwhelmed about the amount of schoolwork I have to accomplish during the day. I consistently tell myself that if I

take a quick nap I will feel refreshed and ready to do my schoolwork after. Unfortunately, no matter how many alarms I set my naps are never short. On average, they last three hours rather than 20 minutes (the recommended length for a refreshing power nap). Additionally, I have taken up a new hobby which is baking. The problem is that I have a history of struggling with eating disorders and baking desserts frequently is dangerous. With the stress of the virus, I tend to eat in order to soothe my anxiety. When I feel overwhelmed, I walk to my kitchen and bake something new. Unfortunately due to this frequent baking, I have gained some weight. Although it is not very noticeable, I have become very aware of it. This tends to make me angry and it becomes a self destructive cycle in which I get angry at myself and to relax I bake something and then eat it which results in more weight gain and anger. The excessive sugar also contributes to my constant exhaustion. Another effect has been the increase in my Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder during the lockdown. At first I was under the impression that online school would be easier and more relaxing but unfortunately with my ADHD, I have difficulty focusing or concentrating on anything school related. I was diagnosed with ADHD in middle school and I have struggled with it throughout the years but it has never prevented me from achieving academically. In high school I always studied and did homework at a coffee shop or the public library, but that is not an option in lockdown. This online quarter has been much more difficult for me than I ever predicted. Lastly, for emotional effects, my mind has been in a constant self-deprecating loop. Not only am I oversleeping, and stress eating, but whenever I begin to complain about how anxious or depressed I feel, I remind myself that most of the world is suffering much more than I am. Once I remind myself that there are some people dying from the virus, I tend to become angry with myself for feeling any kind of self pity.

In terms of physical effects, exercise has been a sporadic part of my lockdown life. Before lockdown, my favorite exercise consisted of spin classes, yoga classes, and dance classes. Although I can still do yoga or dance at home, it is difficult to motivate myself. I always work harder when I am in an exercise class environment. The lack of exercise also contributes to the weight gain and to the exhaustion. A second physical effect has been rashes and other skin conditions. Due to stress I scratch parts of my face and neck while I sleep; this usually happens during finals but it has been consistently happening during lockdown. Additionally, I have thinning eyelids and they are often very red and dry. These skin conditions have been looked at by medical professionals and stress has been determined as the cause. Most of my stress comes from the situation the world is in due to the pandemic. Overall, COVID-19 has negatively affected me in emotional and physical ways due to lockdown orders in my community.

The pandemic has also created stress for my family, especially financially. My father owns a tile company and although he has not been laid off (since he is self-employed), the business has been losing money. This has caused stress for my father and put a strain on my parents' relationship since they work together. Although my family can still afford basic necessities, it has created an atmosphere of negativity in my family home. I have also seen this pandemic affect my 18 year old brother in negative ways. For example, the Advanced Placement tests (taken in high school) have all been moved online and have been shortened to 45 minutes rather than the usual 3 hours. My brother is also supposed to be starting college in the fall and the uncertainty as to whether my brother and I will go back to college in a few months has created stress for my entire family. Lastly, my mother's parents live in France and they are both 94 years old. I have seen the stress take a toll on my mother especially since my family had plane tickets to France

for the summer that have now been cancelled. I can see my mother worrying that her parents will pass away before she gets the chance to say goodbye. Overall, COVID-19 has brought a stressful atmosphere into my family home.

As for my community, the pandemic has created division. A few times a week I take a drive around my neighborhood with no destination; I just want to leave my house. Around the end of April I remember seeing few people and the people I did see kept to themselves and wore masks. The past week however, I have noticed that outside the Starbucks there has been a crowd of people waiting for their drinks, chatting, close to each other with not one person wearing a mask. I passed by the beach this week and it was as crowded as a normal summer day. This past week it seems as though everyone decided that coronavirus would be fixed if they treated it as though it did not exist. For example, through social media I have noticed that many people from my high school are having parties (such as for Cinco de Mayo) and giant group picnics and are attempting to live life as if the virus is nonexistent. Additionally, I live near San Clemente which is in Orange County, California. During the past month or so, there have been frequent protests of lockdown and requirements to wear masks in San Clemente. I have not participated in any protests but I have kept up through social media. Some examples of what these protest signs said are “We are human! We are Free!”, “My freedom doesn’t end where your fear begins”, “1984 no more”, “The media is the virus”, “Pandemics does not cancel our constitutional rights! Freedom over fear.” There are many other poster slogans, however these are the most common examples. I personally do not agree with protesting lockdown orders, however it does portray a divide in opinions within the community. It seems that half of the community believes that the virus is

essentially a hoax, and the other half believe that constant sanitization and wearing masks is the only way the virus will begin to disappear.

As for my predictions for the future, I believe that school will most likely continue to be online for fall quarter 2020. I predict that lockdown orders will continue into the summer months however, I believe people in my community will continue to ignore them. I think businesses will begin to open up but with strict low capacity requirements. For San Clemente and Southern Orange County specifically I predict that life will resume to normal but with a twist. Things will be open but with requirements such as masks. I do not believe that life will become completely normal (like it was before the pandemic) until at least 2021. This prediction of 2021 is assuming that antibodies are effective in allowing those who have already had the virus to not catch it again. I am scheduled to study abroad in Australia in spring 2021 and although I am still hopeful that my program will not be cancelled I realize that there is a good chance it will be cancelled. When I moved out of my sorority house on March 9, I never predicted that this pandemic would have lasted this long. I was already at my family home when UCLA decided to close till April 10th and later for the rest of spring quarter. I did not realize I was leaving for the rest of the year when I left UCLA. I was excited that finals would be online since that seemed less stressful and overall easier. It was not, if anything online school has been much harder, due to the lack of motivation and concentration at home. Overall, my predictions for the future are rather pessimistic, I do not believe will return to normal until at least the year 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic relates to the class “Social History of Spain and Portugal: Age of Silver in Spain and Portugal, 1479 to 1789”, especially the period of Columbus’s journey to the Americas. The Columbian Exchange brought new diseases to the Americas such as measles,

typhus and most importantly small pox (Ruiz). The Native Americans who caught these diseases all died and these civilizations were almost completely wiped out. Although COVID-19 is a pandemic, it is not nearly as deadly, and but has created strain on the world since people today were unprepared for a pandemic. The smallpox pandemic also disrupted the economy and social lives of Native Americans, however this did not last long since they died soon after the disease was introduced to the Americas. There is a chance that if coronavirus was introduced in the 1500s, it would be more deadly than it is today due to improved medicine and medical technology in the present day. Additionally, coronavirus has affected a wider variety of people and is a worldwide pandemic rather than a continental pandemic. Although both pandemics, the effects are completely different due to the time period and the technology and science associated with that time period. A pandemic in a few hundred years would also look very different than COVID-19 does today. Overall, the coronavirus pandemic has similarities to the smallpox pandemic of the 1500s, the response and effects have differed greatly mostly due to the time period rather than the actual virus itself.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put my mind and body in a constant state of intense stress and has done the same for my family. Everyone in my community seems to be reacting differently which has created division, frustration, and protests. The end to the pandemic does not seem to be anytime in the near future. This pandemic will serve as an indication of the medicine and science in history, just as the smallpox epidemic tells historians a lot about the life of Native Americans in the 16th century. As the world continues to struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, the solution rests in education and having all world citizens work toward ending the spread of the virus.