

Second Paper- Reflection on COVID-19

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I remember hearing the words “COVID-19” on the news a few months ago. I remember learning that it was a horrible virus in China caused by people eating bats. Everyday, I would hear how more and more people were losing their lives over this virus in China. At the time, all I could think about was how bad I felt for those people living in China and what a scary world they must be living in. I remember feeling so lucky to be living in the United States. Fast forward to a couple months later, and the entire world is suffering from coronavirus. This virus that was introduced by China soon turned into a worldwide pandemic, where millions of people around the world became victims to it. The world we took for granted became filled with uncertainty and fear. While socializing and gathering with others was once considered to be normal, with COVID-19 taking over, staying away from friends and family became the new norm. People no longer had the luxury of dining out, shopping or going to the gym. The once unfamiliar phrases of quarantine, social distancing, and staying six feet apart began to dictate the lives of millions of people. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all aspects of life, some of which include social, economical, and political aspects. As historians, it is also important for us to consider other historic pandemics, such as the Bubonic Plague.

With coronavirus practically taking over, I felt like my world was falling apart in front of my eyes, one by one. First, UCLA cancelled all in person instruction and moved everything online for the end of winter quarter and the first two weeks of spring quarter. Shortly after, we received an email saying that the entire spring quarter would be online. I was heartbroken when I received this email because as a transfer student I wanted to make the most out of the two years I had at UCLA. Going to a four year university that has a campus is very different from a community college. I was looking forward to the

experience of being a student at UCLA, physically being at the campus, and physically being a part of that community. However, because of coronavirus my experience of being at UCLA physically had been cut short. While I used to leave my house for class everyday on the weekdays and to visit family on weekends, nowadays the only reason I leave my house is to go grocery shopping. Prior to coronavirus, going to the grocery store was one of my favorite leisurely activities. I would wander from aisle to aisle, searching for new ingredients I thought could be useful in the kitchen. However, my trips to the grocery store since coronavirus started are not the same, as I cannot wait to leave the grocery store once I get there.

COVID-19 has also interfered with my family's religious traditions, as we no longer have the same sense of community that we used to have. Although Friday night Shabbat dinners were a normal tradition in my family, where my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins would all gather around each other, because of COVID-19 we are no longer able to continue this tradition. While I used to look forward to Friday nights in the past, after coronavirus took over and stay at home orders came into place, Friday nights began to feel like any other night of the week. The holiday of Passover, which is the Jewish holiday where we commemorate the journey of the Jewish people from slavery to freedom, was not the same this year. While my family and all the Jewish families around the world would celebrate Passover at each other's houses, gathered around one another, this was the first year I did not spend Passover with my family because of the stay at home orders. Our Passover dinners, which were once loud and filled with the commotion of thirty people in one room, were now replaced with silence as our family of three read the prayers to ourselves.

This pandemic is emphasizing the significance of different rituals and celebrations we hold for certain milestones. These are a part of the fabric of our social lives and the connections we make with people. However, because of coronavirus, we are prevented from making these connections. People are being disconnected from one another as a result of churches, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship being shut down. While these places of worship used to bring my family and friends together, COVID-19 has interfered with all of our lives and our ability to attend our place of worship. Furthermore, social gatherings such as baby showers, engagements, and weddings have all been cancelled in observance of the quarantine. I was looking forward to my cousin's wedding this month, which was cancelled given the circumstances. While it was once considered normal to celebrate among friends and family in large groups, coronavirus has ruined that image of the world for us. As a result of coronavirus, there have been government orders put into place to ban large gatherings, and have people stay home.

While the streets used to be filled with cars and the sidewalks filled with people, when I look outside my window now, the streets are empty and there are barely people on the sidewalk, proving that COVID-19 is having a detrimental effect on the economy. As a result of the stay at home orders put into place, several businesses have been affected by this decision by having to close. While only essential stores, such as supermarkets, are allowed to be open during the quarantine, a variety of other businesses that remained closed are suffering losses. Malls, dine-in restaurants, gyms, and salons are among the few businesses that have been severely impacted by coronavirus. The forced shut down of nonessential stores has affected our social lives. I no longer have the opportunity to go out to dinner or the movies with my friends. I can no longer spend my Saturday's at the

mall or in the public library. COVID-19 has really opened my eyes and made me realize that I took these simple activities for granted. While we once had the pleasure of spending our leisurely time out in public with others, life since COVID-19 has not been the same. Therefore, as a result of stores being closed, businesses are no longer generating any profit. Millions of employees have been impacted as a result of stores closing down. They are suffering from a loss of income, which is in turn having a detrimental impact on them and their families.

The impact of coronavirus on our population has been negative. I am just one of the millions of people who wakes up everyday with anxiety about the virus. I am anxious about the possibility of getting COVID-19, as I do not want to spread the virus to my elderly parents, whose age makes it potentially life threatening for them. People all over the world are growing restless, as they are watching several innocent people fall as victims to COVID-19. The growing concern and outrage of the public is having political consequences on the reputations of the leaders who are handling the crisis. Due to the fact that COVID-19 has essentially disrupted the normal lives of people all over the world, it has caused criticism towards the people who are handling this issue. Although our leaders have placed stay at home orders, this does not change the fact that everyday more people are dying from coronavirus. President Trump has been attacked for mishandling the situation as coronavirus cases have been increasing with time. This situation could be detrimental for President Trump's career as president, as it may interfere with him getting reelected for the next presidential election.

When looking at historic pandemics, the Bubonic Plague, or the Black Death, is important to consider, as it was believed to be the deadliest pandemic in history. Caused

by a bacterium known as *Yersinia pestis*, the Bubonic plague spread through fleas that travelled on ships of merchants. The plague was transmitted to humans who either came into contact with the infected animals or who were bitten by fleas that had fed on infected rodents (Black). The Bubonic Plague was “a European-wide phenomenon [that] devastated vast areas of the Iberian Peninsula” (Ruiz 18). In Castile, the Bubonic Plague had a detrimental impact on the lives of its civilians. While its most common symptoms included swollen lymph nodes, other symptoms similar to COVID-19 were fever and headache. The unfortunate Castilian citizens who were infected by the plague often had less than a week to live. Therefore Castilian life at the time of the Bubonic Plague, similar to our modern day world now amidst COVID-19, was filled with chaos, as people were fearful of losing their lives to the plague. Furthermore, the plague was potentially life threatening to anyone who was infected by it. Therefore, members of the peasantry, common people, and the royalty were all possible candidates who could be infected by the plague. Unfortunately, the ruler of Castile from 1312-1350, Alfonso XI, lost his life to the plague (Week 2, Lecture 3). While he was the only European ruler to have lost his life to the plague, his absence had a significant impact on Castilian life.

The Bubonic Plague in Castile also contributed to a significant decline in the economic aspect. As a result of the Bubonic Plague and the many people who lost their lives to it, the economic activity in the region was progressively declining. As we see in the current world we are living in, COVID-19 has also disrupted our economic world. Furthermore, “many villages throughout northern Castile... were abandoned” as a result of the Bubonic Plague (Ruiz 18). Therefore, this proves to us that the living conditions in Castile at the time of the Bubonic Plague were so horrific that people fled for their lives.

Additionally, “one of the consequences of the plague... was an increase in violence against religious minorities, above all against Jews...” (Ruiz 19). In Spain, there was an increase of Anti-Semitism, as Jews were blamed for the Bubonic Plague. In our modern day world today, Chinese people are facing racism due to the coronavirus outbreak. People are accusing the Chinese for spreading COVID-19, similar to how people were accusing the Jews in Spain for causing the Bubonic Plague.

In regards to what the future holds for us after COVID-19, I believe that we will continue to live our lives in anxiety and fear. Even when the government removes the restrictions, I believe that it will still be dangerous for people to leave their homes because the virus will increase. While a good portion of people may choose to stay home, there will still be some people who will choose to leave their homes. However, I think that it will definitely take a few years before life will return to normal. Normal being what life was like before coronavirus took over, where people had the chance to go out in public whenever they wanted to without being fearful of contracting a virus that could potentially be life threatening. People will no longer engage in the same friendly manner that they used to. In my culture, it is customary for family members to greet each other by hugging and kissing one another on the cheek. However, after coronavirus is over, I do not think we will greet each other the same way. I believe that we will greet one another without physically touching each other. I believe that many people will choose not to participate in weddings and big gatherings for a long time out of their fear for coronavirus. Our economy will continue to suffer because people will be hesitant to dine in restaurants and go shopping. Activities that were once considered to be normal will no longer be considered appropriate.

Bibliography

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Ruiz Lecture Week 2, Lecture 3