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A bit about myself: My name is Soledad Arguello and I am a first-generation student. I am currently a fourth-year student at UCLA and my major is History.

Since March 10, 2020, my college experience at the University of California, Los Angeles has changed quite significantly. The change began on March 10 because UCLA sent out an email explaining that starting tomorrow, March 11, 2020, all in-person classes were being suspended and transitioning to online platforms through April 10, 2020.<sup>1</sup> However, the deadline of April 10 was then pushed to the end of the Spring quarter, then to summer Session A, then to Summer Session C, and finally to Fall 2020. The change to online platforms arose because COVID-19 was spreading rapidly throughout the world. This essay will focus on my personal experience with the COVID-19 situation and what I think the future holds.

When I first received the email that in-person classes were being suspended for a while, I was okay with it and was looking forward to the change. I thought the transition to online classes would give me more time to do the things I wanted. I would be able to visit my family more, hang out with friends, and enjoy my last moments of freedom before I fully entered the workforce and became an adult. However, things did not go the way I thought they would, and soon reality set in. I realized the magnitude of COVID-19 and what it was doing to the world. I could no longer look at the positive things I thought COVID-19 would bring to my life because I

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<sup>1</sup> Gene D. Block. "UCLA's Transition to Online Instruction." Office of the Chancellor. UCLA, March 10, 2020. <https://chancellor.ucla.edu/messages/uclas-transition-online-instruction/>.

would think of how others were struggling. For example, many international students could not go home and were stuck in the university dorms all alone. This made me greatly appreciate my family and being able to go home. It also made me even more grateful for having a car because it made it easier for me to pack up my things and go home.

Once I was home, it did not take long for the problems to begin. The problems arose right after I got home because that is when everything became so real to me. The first issue that affected me because of the COVID-19 situation was not being able to pay rent for my Los Angeles apartment. I could not pay the rent for my Los Angeles apartment because I was helping my parents pay for rent, which is where I had begun to live 100% of the time and continue to do so. This put me in a difficult position because I had to choose where to pay for rent. Luckily, after posting on different Facebook pages many times, I was able to find someone to sublease my spot. This allowed me the opportunity to catch my breath because I no longer had to worry about paying for two different rents. I know some might think that it should have been a no brainer on where I should have paid rent, but I had to stop and think about my roommates in the Los Angeles apartment. I could not just abandon them and have them figure out how to pay my share of the rent. I also did not want to ruin a good friendship that had begun my first year of college.

Furthermore, COVID-19 has affected my schoolwork and mental health. My schoolwork has been affected because I find it harder to concentrate. It does not help that I no longer have access to a library. To me, a library is important because it is a quiet place with ample desk space. In my current living situation, I do not have any personal space because I live in a small apartment with my parents and older sister. My parents' apartment is normally short of space, but since my return, space has been even tighter because of the items I brought from my Los Angeles apartment. With no personal space to call my own, setting up a desk or workspace is

difficult. I normally find myself doing schoolwork or attending lectures in my living room. Attending lectures is sometimes difficult because of the background noise. I live in an area that can be quite loud, which makes it hard for me to fully participate in classes. I am able to participate to a small degree in classes because Zooms chat feature. The chat feature from Zoom also allows me the opportunity to ask questions if I have any. The background noise, especially when it is music, contributes to my difficulty in concentrating because I get distracted.

My mental health has suffered greatly from the COVID-19 situation because it has caused me to feel depressed. On some occasions, I find it extremely difficult to get motivated and get things done. It feels like this situation is not going to get any better and that social distancing is going to be our new normal. My emotions of anger and frustration during the COVID-19 situation have increased. For example, I find myself being angry over the smallest things. However, one good thing that the COVID-19 situation has brought up is the importance of mental health. Our current situation has taught us the importance of processing our emotions and participating in self-care.

The situation of COVID-19 has greatly impacted my family. The first way it impacted my family was by reducing the hours my dad works. He was suddenly told by his boss that he could no longer work full time because of the COVID-19 situation. My dad works for a small business that delivers food and equipment items to restaurants. However, because of the stay at home orders, many restaurants closed and no longer needed merchandise. With my dad's hours cut more than half, we do not have enough money to pay for rent. The reduction in my dad's work hours has impacted us greatly because he is the main provider. With his income, we can pay for rent, utilities, and other bills. As a result of my dad's hours being reduced and not having enough to pay for rent, I have had to work more hours. I started to work more hours in order to

make up the income my dad has lost. This put a large amount of pressure on me because it adds more responsibilities than I am used to. Working more hours has also made it harder for me complete school assignments and attend office hours.

Another way that COVID-19 has affected my family is by making us argue more. Since we are stuck at home, we tend to step on each other's toes more frequently. We are more irritable because we are frustrated by our situation. We feel very powerless and wish we could do something about it. Our schedules also cause tension because we all want to do our thing. However, because we live in a small apartment that is impossible. One way we decrease our family fights is by setting aside specific quiet time. During this time, no one is allowed to talk to each other. This helps us decompress a bit and take time to process how things are going.

During this pandemic, millions of people have been thrown into a financial crisis. However, I feel like undocumented people have been hit the worst. Undocumented people have been hit the worst because they don't have access to the same resources. For example, my family and I, who are undocumented, did not qualify for the stimulus package that was passed in mid-March because of our legal status. Being excluded from a stimulus package because of your legal status is cruel and inhuman. What this exclusion does is deny help to the most vulnerable. It also puts a greater amount of undocumented people at risk for COVID-19 because they are forced to go out and work. This exclusion of financial help also impacts the growth of immigrant children. For example, children of undocumented parents are more prone to hunger because they don't have food to eat. Immigrant children are also prone to fall behind in schoolwork because they don't have access to the same technology as other children.

The financial crisis that undocumented people face is impacted by where they live. In particular, it depends on what state undocumented people live. For example, in Chicago and

California, undocumented people have been granted a state relief package if they show a decrease in income. However, the aid that undocumented people have received has brought forth a backlash. Some people argue that immigrants should not receive aid because they do not contribute to society. They also argue that it is unfair to burden taxpayers for the benefit of immigrants. The backlash that undocumented people have received for getting financial aid has increased resentment and towards immigrants. The aid that undocumented people have received has become a political topic and issue. One of the reasons it has become a political issue is because of President Trump. His administration has done nothing but make the point that Americans come first. Trump's response to the COVID-19 situation reveals a negative biased towards immigrants. His response to the situation also shows the inequality that plagues America.

The COVID-19 situation in American has shown how divided the country is. Not even during a pandemic can the country come together. For example, the country is currently divided over when and how the country should open. This division is made even bigger by the President who insists on opening up the country immediately. Trump's focus is on the economy rather than human lives. My hope for the next couple of months is that President Trump changes his focus to the preservation of human lives. I hope Trump and his followers can see that the economy of America is not an important topic during this time. I also hope that the division and inequality that Americans face can decrease and ultimately be erased. Most importantly, I hope that America can create a better health care system that takes of everyone and that is prepared for a pandemic. No one should be denied access to a doctor because of their income level.

Additionally, I hope to see an America that is no longer polarized by political parties. I also hope to see a country that can take care of its most vulnerable, regardless of their

immigration status. Finally, I hope that social distancing becomes a thing of the past. I hope to see parks open again with large crowds embracing each other and making up for lost time.

To conclude, the COVID-19 situation has altered life as we know it. This pandemic has ushered in a New World that many of us are not ready to embrace. Nevertheless, it is here and is something we have to get used to. In this New World, however, we have a chance to learn from our mistakes and make a better future. We can create new laws, customs, and traditions that will be beneficial to all. This pandemic can also help us remember our origins and therefore admit the mistakes our countries did to the indigenous population. All in all, I hope this pandemic can make us stronger, wiser, and more caring.