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Hist 129A

18 May 2020

### Covid-19 Reflection

The start of 2020 has brought great anxiety in the lives of many UCLA students including mine. The Covid-19 virus has completely shut down the world and has caused the futures of almost every college student in the world to become jeopardized, once again including mine. I am currently a third year history major and first year transfer student at UCLA. This virus has radically altered my expectations for how college life would be as well as my expectations for how the rest of my life will be. As the virus began to spread over the world, I began to feel anxiety and doubt over what would happen to school and how UCLA would respond, but up until the school actually announced it was moving to online only, I never believed that I would be taking UCLA classes from my home in San Diego. During the lockdown currently imposed by California, I have come to hate the phrase “unprecedented times” as it seems like every business or news organization has been using it constantly on tv, but truth be told it is really the most accurate descriptor for the year 2020. Every experience that I have had because of this virus feels unexpected and unplanned. The days have begun to blend together and it wasn’t until I typed the date on this paper that I realized it was the middle of May and not April. Truly nothing about this virus has been anything I have experienced in my life and has caused a great deal of chaos in my life, just as it has done to everyone living during this time period.

In my personal life I have been blessed that my dad is not in danger of losing his job and is able to continue providing for my family. It is because of this that my worries are nothing compared to the worries of other students. I have had to worry about paying for college, as my parents are still able to afford to pay for me and have not necessarily seen a dip in income due to this crisis. In reality, my worries are instead focused squarely on the uncertainty about how the 2020-2021 school year will proceed. One of the biggest worries for me this year has been housing, as my transfer student status means that I have no guaranteed housing for next year. It took me until the end of winter quarter to find housing but unfortunately (or possibly fortunately) I wasn't able to sign onto the lease that some of my friends had already signed on by the time I had to leave the school. While signing the lease is still an option for me, the uncertainty over whether fall quarter will be in person or not has led to me having doubts and anxiety over whether I should sign the lease yet. This uncertainty has been a great stress in my life, and I would rather hear bad news than no news at all in regards to the fall quarter. As a transfer student this is especially tough, as there has been a lingering possibility in the back of my mind that I will only be able to spend two quarters of college life actually studying at a real university instead of a community college. I would rather have this possibility confirmed than to constantly worry that I will end up missing out on the college experience.

This is not to say that I have been mired in constant anxiety and doubt. In regards to the lockdown, I would say that I have actually adapted very well to the shelter in place orders. I am naturally an introvert and having an excuse to stay in my house and not have to interact with people I don't want to interact with has actually been nice. Obviously it would be preferable to not have a disease currently ravaging our country, but in some way I am enjoying my time in

lockdown. Like many others, I have been able to experience many shows and video games that I did not get to experience due to the lack of time college life afforded me. While it has been great to experience this, I would still much rather be on campus playing ultimate frisbee and hanging out with my friends instead of being confined to my house 24 hours a day.

While I may be enjoying the lockdown in some way, this virus has caused my plans for the future to radically alter. Prior to the virus I was interning for the Federal Relations office at UCLA and planned to enter into a career working for political offices, but due to the advent of Covid-19, this internship has been placed on hold until it is safe to resume working at the office. Due to the economic uncertainties that have come about due to the virus essentially closing our entire economy, I am instead pondering whether it would be best for me to apply to graduate school in order to wait out the economic downturn that this virus has caused this country. To be honest I really have no desire to attend more years of school, but if the alternative is graduating next year during an economic recession then I would rather spend more time in school. The debt that I would take on is the only reason I am still undecided on this issue.

While I may be one of the luckier people in regards to the impact of this virus, many people in this country have not been so lucky. So many people have lost their homes, jobs, and businesses that it feels like recovery is going to be extremely difficult if not impossible. What makes it worse is that politicians are completely divided on how to reopen the economy, with some states having already opened up their economy whereas my state, California, is still largely closed. I'm absolutely not advocating for reopening as it seems to me like it would be much more beneficial to take a cautious approach to reopening to avoid the chances of a second wave being even worse. It frustrates me to see people gathering in large groups in public areas and

protesting to reopen the economy because they need a haircut. I am definitely not a doctor, but I am smart enough to listen to people who are doctors who think we should be more cautious about reopening. This crisis has caused me to feel like people only care about themselves and would rather the elderly and immunocompromised have their lives put in jeopardy so that they can go about their normal day. I think if anything that is what this crisis is showing people.

This crisis has also affected my family in a number of ways. My dad was about to move to the Bay Area to start a new job, but because of the necessity of working from home for non-essential jobs has had to start his job working from home in San Diego. This has worked out fine for him as far as I can see, but I assume that starting a new job from home has its difficulties. This crisis has been much more stressful for my brother and his wife as they are both pharmacists. Being a pharmacist is already stressful, but the added stress of having to deal with limiting exposure to Covid-19 makes a tough job even tougher.

I think this pandemic also shows how little the different nations of the world cooperate on things and how the different governments are incapable of jointly solving problems. This virus has been known for a while now, but it seems like no countries had the sense to cooperate to try and stop it. Between China trying to initially hide the virus, and the United States not working with other countries to determine the best way to stop the spread of the virus, it seems to me like our current world political system is completely incapable of stopping any crisis whatsoever. This crisis has shown me and hopefully other people that we need to change the way the United States and other countries collaborate on issues because things like Covid-19 are not nation-specific and affect everyone equally. I hope that the countries can start to become more

interdependent on each other in order to ensure that crises like this are never allowed to get as out of control as they are currently.

In terms of the future, I think this crisis will have long-standing effects on this country that will be felt for the rest of my life. I think the majority of people that had to live through this situation will take healthcare and personal hygiene much more seriously than they did before. Simple tasks like handwashing and using hand sanitizer have become much more important and I could see a future where many people are much more skeptical about touching things in public. It also seems strange to me that in a time where a pandemic is raging across our country and many Americans can't afford visits to a doctor, a candidate like Bernie Sanders was not able to be more competitive in the Democratic primaries, even though his main platform of universal healthcare would have alleviated the concerns and problems that many Americans are experiencing right now. I think in the future universal healthcare will gain a lot of political traction as more and more people have to struggle with having to pay healthcare costs associated with covid-19 as well as potentially watching family members struggle with paying for Covid-19 related expenses. Because of this virus I can see a future where universal healthcare is a reality for the United States.

While Covid-19 has thrown many people's lives into complete disarray, as I have learned in this class it is nothing compared to the impact that Smallpox had on the indigenous population of the Americans. Currently Covid-19 is not really a threat to people unless they are elderly or immunocompromised. This is in stark contrast to Smallpox which ravaged the native populations of the Americas (Ruiz, Spanish Society, 28). The native populations had never been exposed to something like smallpox which made it all the deadlier. In addition they did not have the same

knowledge of medicine and hygiene that we possess today. Just by simply adopting measures like staying at home, wearing facemasks, and handwashing for twenty seconds, the spread of disease can be drastically limited. Obviously this was not known and in conjunction with the fact that smallpox is a much deadlier disease, the indigenous populations suffered immensely. While differing in the severity of the diseases, the way that Smallpox and Covid-19 spread can be seen as similar. Both were diseases that spread from one continent to all over the world. In a way, the fact that diseases can spread so far shows how globalized our society has become, and how this globalized society can be observed as far back as the Spanish conquest of the Americas. As our society becomes more and more interconnected it is important to take precautions to ensure that diseases do not shut down the entire world economy.

I think in the future that when people look back at Covid-19, the uncertainty of the time period will be one of the things that historians note the most. People don't know when this disease will go away, if ever, college students have no idea whether they will be able to continue going to school like they normally have, and worst of all it is hard to even know if you have the disease in the first place. I think that because of all this uncertainty, people will begin to take healthcare much more seriously and countries will put more effort into collaborating with each other to solve issues that affect every country. I also think that our future will see a society that is more willing to aid the people who are actually suffering from the effects of a virus that is completely out of their control. Regardless of how the future actually ends up, this crisis has brought great uncertainty into my life and has drastically altered my perception of how the future will look.