

REFLECTION ON THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC OF 2020

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The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 is a pandemic that is severely impacting humans on a global scale. Some of the effects we do not know of yet but will find out in due time. I am a history major and have read about many different plagues and pandemics. I never imagined I would ever live through one in my lifetime. The sense of impending doom is terrifying, I wake up hoping this is all a bad dream but it is not. Though I am very aware that our situation is not as bad as previous pandemics because we are better informed, equipped and have access to more resources, I strongly believe we will be negatively impacted like earlier societies.

Historically, pandemics have plagued societies and weakened their economy and society as a whole. Professor Teo Ruiz discusses in one of his lectures the devastation that ravaged the indigenous populations of the Americas and the Caribbean. The societies were left weak and vulnerable because of plague and pandemics that ravished their nations.¹ Once weakened, it was seemingly easy for Spain and Europe to conquer these societies. The United States is currently a world power. My fear is our economy will have a tough time recovering from the economic devastation of this pandemic and we will all suffer because of this. Many businesses will not recover and will disappear. If our federal government raises spending to fund COVID-19 recovery programs we will have a tremendous budget deficit. If our federal government does not provide this financial support to stimulate the economy in order to not grow our budget deficit but we will not have an economy. Either way we will be in a desperate situation. Food, resources, housing, healthcare and most everything will be negatively impacted. We will become a weak nation. Economic stagnation will mean higher taxes, and a reduction in government or federally funded services like Medical. We will certainly see inflation and

¹ Ruiz, Teo. "Pre Recorded Lecture April 13, 2020." UCLA from Spring 2018 session.

reduction in production and manufacturing. Our food supply chain is already impacted, as of now it is disrupted and causing scarcity of meats, dairy and eggs.

The coronavirus or COVID-19 virus is having a tremendous impact on our mental health, both as a society and as individuals. My family's mental health has been impacted severely by this isolation and "safe at home" orders. I have two children, both boys ages seven and nine years old. They were very active boys before coronavirus. They played little league baseball, travel baseball, soccer and participated in after-school enrichment programs like TedEd, a sort of TedTalks for school children. We have been isolated or quarantined since March 13, 2020. My children and I only leave the house to go on walks in an isolated parking lot of a park because the park itself is closed. My nine year old son has had at least four mental breakdowns. He cries uncontrollably and begs me to go out and take him to school and to play baseball with his friends. I have explained to him the situation and the mandatory regulations that are in place and why we have to isolate. He understands but continues to feel this is unfair and he has stated that he hates this life. He has never felt or said anything like this ever before. He was a happy, kind boy. My boys have begged to go grocery shopping with me, something they disliked before. Nowadays they would do anything to be able to go grocery shopping with mom. A simple errand that has become a serious risk for children. In explaining to my children the dangers of pathogens and COVID-19, I have the difficult task of telling them that mom is immunocompromised and therefore at higher risk of developing complications if I contract coronavirus. They immediately associated that with a higher risk of death, "Mommy are you going to die if you get coronavirus?" My heart sank and I felt helpless and hopeless because this was something I had no control over. I do not lie to my children and choose to tell them the

truth. I have an autoimmune disease that makes me more susceptible to infections and viruses like pneumonia, they can become life-threatening. I am terrified to die because I do not want to leave my children young without a mother. I want to see them grow old and I want to be a grandma one day. One lifetime with them is not enough. It has now been a little over two months since we have been isolated at home. Other than video chat we have not seen other humans besides our neighbors from afar and maybe once every two weeks. The lack of contact with other humans has become unbearable.

The fear of contracting coronavirus has become physically and mentally debilitating. I took a psychology class before I transferred to UCLA and I remember a lecture where the professor discussed how long-term isolation contributes to the risk of premature death and chronic diseases like inflammation, high blood pressure and an increase in stress hormones. My mom and I live together, she is a caregiver to an elderly woman whose health has deteriorated during this pandemic. I have seen that my mother's mental, emotional and physical health have also suffered as she continues to work and care for her elderly patient. My mother has developed a severe case of Bell's Palsy and her cholesterol has increased. She is not sleeping well and has lost her appetite, I suspect she is depressed too. Though we continue to exercise and eat healthy during this quarantine nothing seems to help her feel better. I am afraid this pandemic will take a toll on her life, she is sixty-five years old and she should retire but financially she is unable. If my mother is unable to work due to illness, we will be in a dire financial situation. I write about this because my mom is the matriarch of my family. She is my biggest supporter and my children love her but she has changed since the coronavirus pandemic started. She is my role

model and one hundred percent the strongest, smartest woman I know. I love my mother and am who I am because of her.

My family and I live in what I call a village. We all help each other while providing for ourselves. My brother was laid off from work four weeks into the pandemic. He applied for unemployment benefits the first day he was laid off and as of today still has not received a payment. I do not work, I am a full time student, my children and I depend on child support payments that I hope do not become interrupted because of coronavirus, though I was notified it's a possibility. My mother is the only one in our household that is gainfully employed. This is my last quarter as a UCLA student and will graduate this June 2020. I was planning on getting a part-time job while I prepare for the LSAT, my plans may have to change. I hope we all return to normal soon because homeschooling my boys while having my full-time studies is very difficult. I am afraid my grades will suffer. I feel very few of us were prepared and equipped for this.

Native american societies were devastated by diseases and epidemics when Europeans came in contact with them. Not only did smallpox decimate their population but the economic devastation had a tremendous impact on their ability to survive. Their crops were not farmed, their land was not tended. Many more Native Americans died from the aftermath of the smallpox than smallpox itself. Though I realize we are not the same society as the Native Americans, we will be greatly impacted as well. Many jobs will disappear, our economy will change but not in the drastic way some have speculated, at least not for the elite. It will be a while before the mandatory safe at home orders are lifted and in the meantime many small and large businesses will disappear. As Professor Teo Ruiz states, “historians have long argued about

the short- and long-term effects of the sickness.”² One can not separate the financial impact of COVID-19 and its relation to the decline in health of those suffering financial loss. Just like I can not separate myself from my mother’s work and financial situation, we are all connected and one thing can have a tremendous impact on other things that seem unrelated.

Healthcare is an important issue for me. I currently have UCLA USHIP health insurance, when I graduate in June of 2020 I will no longer qualify for it. I will have to apply for medical. Because of my autoimmune disease I also suffer from chronic inflammation, joint pain and respiratory issues. One thing that has become more concerning to me during coronavirus pandemic is the anxiety that I have developed. I thought I handled stress appropriately and have never suffered stress. I was recently diagnosed with developed anxiety due to stress from coronavirus. I have been feeling shortness of breath, and wake up with my heart racing. I have never experienced anything like it, realizing that my body is suffering in a way I cannot control is scary. I have become more conscious of meditation, breathing and relaxation techniques. But when I get that feeling coming on it feels like I’m having a heart attack. I am thankful that as of today I do not know of anyone near me or close to me that has died from coronavirus or even contracted it. We are just beginning to figure out the impact and damage coronavirus inflicted on the human body, we will not know of the long-term effects for years. The population of Spain took almost a century and half to return to pre-plague level.³

One can make some comparisons from previous pandemics but they would be invalid comparisons because we are not in the same situation as Native Americans or indigenous people of the Americas or Europeans during the Dark Ages. We have advanced technology and

² Ruiz, Teofilo F. *Spain's Centuries of Crisis, 1300-1474*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. pg 45

³ Ruiz, Teofilo F. *Spain's Centuries of Crisis, 1300-1474*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. pg 47

resources that make our life during a pandemic tremendously easier than earlier societies, the most important being the internet. It made it possible for many to continue working from home and the ability to continue our education. The only difference I would say from other viruses and this novel coronavirus is the transmission. Since it was transmitted from animal to human we have no immunity to it and have to develop a vaccine. Also the damage this virus inflicts on the entire body is new to the human race. No virus has ever caused this type of cellular damage and inflammation.

The political consequences for me seem to be the most worrisome. I worry this pandemic is being used as an excuse to demonize one another without realizing that in the end we will all end up losing. There is nothing to gain from the back and forth rhetoric. We need a leader to help our nation come out of this pandemic in a semi decent state. We lack leadership and this divisiveness needs to end. Our society needs to change and people need to realize they need to vote for their socio-economic interest and realize we are all different based on our individual experiences, race and class. I understand politics and the difficulties involved but our nation is failing and we need a complete overhaul. In my History 129A class I have learned that history does in fact repeat itself. I learned that just like Queen Isabella of Spain was recognized for unifying Spain, she also gained many enemies for her ideology. I concluded that if she reigned today she would be considered a dictator. She is revered by many but in reality she was a racist, power hungry dictator. Among the Inquisition, war, colonization and Christianization of the Americans and New World she is responsible for many atrocities. Yet she is considered one of Europe's greatest queens. History does repeat itself, I can only hope we learn from it.