

University of California, Los Angeles

History 129A Essay #2

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I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate student and my major is Political Science. My story has an odd beginning because my notice of Covid-19 began on January 26, 2020. On that Sunday morning, I was casually looking through my Twitter feed as I usually do and I saw an ABC news headline that Orange County in Southern California confirmed its first case of coronavirus. I immediately sent this to my family group message and moments later I found out the news that Kobe Bryant had passed away in a helicopter crash. Immediately, I forgot coronavirus was even a thing and all I could think about was how I lost one of my idols in life. As time passed on, Covid-19 only seemed as a problem for the country of China and I was not worried about the situation at all because I assumed it would be similar to how Ebola was handled a few years ago. Once March came, the virus was everywhere, I specifically remember seeing the turmoil that Italy was in and I was in shock that Italy was hit so hard by the virus and I never thought the United States would have the same issue. The week before finals, on March 10, 2020, I was in Powell Library studying for my upcoming exams when I received the email from Chancellor Gene Block that UCLA was going to transition to online learning due to coronavirus effective until April 10, 2020. Hundreds of students, including myself and my friends, immediately left Powell library to celebrate the news that finals were going to be online and that we would get an extra two weeks away from school the following quarter. My friends and I had planned to go to Palm Springs for spring break and since we were given an extra two weeks of spring break we planned to drive up to Fresno after Palm Springs to meet up more of my friends.

At the time, no one knew the severity of coronavirus and we all assumed that we would be back at school after a prolonged spring break. This celebration and happiness only lasted until the weekend when my parents made the decision that I should move back home for spring quarter. I thought this was an outlandish thing to do and that my parents were overreacting to this

disease that had barely infected anyone. A few days after I moved back home, Eric Garcetti, the mayor of Los Angeles, issued the city's first stay at home order. The same day as the mayor, Gavin Newsom, the governor of California, issued a statewide stay-at-home order and this was when the reality of coronavirus began to hit me.

The first two weeks of quarantine because of Covid-19 were by far the hardest time for me throughout this entire dilemma. I moved from my own apartment in Westwood back into my parents' home and my life completely changed within two days. I transferred into UCLA at the beginning of the 2019 fall quarter, so I only had about two quarters away from home and I was finally beginning to feel comfortable away from home. Although I live about 45 minutes from UCLA, I felt as if I had begun to create my own life away from home and starting the next step towards my future. During these first two weeks of the stay-at-home orders, I felt as if I was going through withdrawal from UCLA. My life reverted back to it was before UCLA, but even more so because I could not leave my house. My mother, being a doctor, undertook an immense amount of stress at home and at work because of the strains coronavirus put on her. My mother being over 60, along with my father, enabled quarantine to be taken especially serious in our household because of the higher risk that comes with age. Not only were there two higher risk people in my household because of age, but my sister who recently became pregnant and was constantly around the house was another at risk person for coronavirus. For the first two weeks of quarantine, I did not step foot out of my house once and the only person who did was my mother for work and my brother to help my mother with groceries. Anytime anything was brought from outside the house into our home, it was immediately sanitized with Lysol wipes as a precaution to kill any of the coronavirus that could come with any item brought from outside.

Being a college student, I often ate outside because I am not the best in the kitchen, so I had to shift from often buying food outside to not eating one meal from outside of the house for weeks. Furthermore, I went from seeing my friends daily to barely speaking to any of them because of the distance. All this sudden change had a major effect on my mental health the first two weeks of the stay-at-home order and I often found myself nearing mental breakdowns because of all the immediate change that happened due to coronavirus. The smallest and almost unnoticeable aspects of normal life began to disappear from my life and that is when I realized I was not going to make it through quarantine if I did not adapt to this new style of life.

After the first two weeks, I felt as if quarantine was never going to end and it felt unbearable to be home any longer. Once I finally fell into a routine, my days in quarantine actually began to feel as if they were flying by. My routine began with me waking up around 10 in the morning and having my usual homemade iced coffee. My next step would be to see if I have any homework due and work on that for a few hours. I would try to fit in a work out daily, then shower, and play video games or watch television until I fell asleep. This routine was very bland and unhealthy, but it had made quarantine much more bearable. As time passed on, the major events in my life were shared with loved ones through zoom and other means of communication rather than in person for safety. My sister, who would normally throw a huge party for the gender reveal of her baby, came to our house and did the gender reveal on zoom on April 11, 2020 for all of our family and her friends to share this special moment with us. Although the gender reveal was held on zoom, it did not change the fact that I was ecstatic that my sister was having a baby girl and it really gave hope to my family that there was something to look forward to throughout this time of quarantine. The little baby girl that my sister was due to

have in October won't know until she is older that she was born during a global pandemic, but she might never know the sense of hope she instilled in my family during these troubling times.

The weeks after my sister's gender reveal flew by so fast that it seemed as if my days all blended into one until my brother proposed to my future sister-in-law on May 9, 2020. This was a very special moment in my life because my brother is one of my best friends and I have been waiting for him to find his special girl. Due to quarantine, my relationship with my brother's girlfriend grew exponentially and I was glad to finally be able to call her one of my sisters. This special moment, like my sister's gender reveal, was held over zoom, so that the rest of my family could share in our celebration. I was ecstatic to welcome her to the family and although we could not physically celebrate with the entire family, the moment felt just as special. This realization made me understand that it didn't matter where you and your family were in the world, the loyalty and love we have for each other runs above anything else in our lives. This was confirmed this past weekend, on May 16, 2020, when my brother and sister-in-law held a drive by birthday celebration for my niece in Florida. It is my family's annual tradition to visit Florida on her birthday and this was supposed to be our 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row, but it was not possible due to coronavirus. The commonality seen in my sister's gender reveal, my brother's proposal, and my niece's birthday was that it didn't matter that my family was spread out across the country because the love we have for each other runs that deep.

This quarantine, although has driven me nuts, has given me a greater appreciation for my family because I now know I could not survive without their constant love and support. My family and I have always butt heads on many things because I tend to be the black sheep in my family. This global pandemic taught me to put aside any differences that we may have because no one will love you the way your family does and I am grateful to have such an amazing family

to fall back on. I hope that the bond between my family stays just as strong once this quarantine is over because of the happiness it has brought into my life.

Covid-19 has allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the world around me and to see the flaws in our society. Coronavirus may have limited me from enjoying myself socially, but it has taught lessons that I don't think I could have learned if society never changed.

Personally, I feel as if I have been able to make the best of my situation because of the family I am surrounded by, but the world around us has suffered immensely and the consequences will be long-lasting. The social, economic, and political consequences have devastated our society and left millions battling to survive. I believe there is a possibility we will not return to our old social lives for years to come from this virus. Until a vaccine is found and easily accessible to everyone around the world, this virus will continue to return in waves and devastate our society.

Economically, coronavirus has increased the unemployment rate and crippled economies around the world leaving people struggling to survive. Essential workers are putting their lives on the lines day in and day out for our society, yet they are struggling to even have the correct supplies to fight this virus. The political consequences has shown people in positions of power using Covid-19 to promote their political agendas rather than save peoples' lives. It is saddening to see people in our nation's capital prioritize money over the lives of American citizens. Although there are an immense amount of politicians using coronavirus to gain politically, we have also seen many of our leaders do exactly what they were voted into office to do. Gavin Newsom, the governor of California, has handled this virus better than any other politician in America.

Although California may have one of the biggest populations in America, his strict stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines has allowed for California to be the example worldwide of how to limit the spread of Covid-19 in highly populated areas. Outside of California, the

handling of Covid-19 is an indicator that there are a plethora of issues in our society that need to be addressed and solved in order to advance in society. Our society has advanced immensely technologically, yet we still were crippled socially, economically, and politically due to Covid-19.

As we learned in this history course, epidemics ravaged through the new world and caused an alarming rate of deaths. Although the mortality rate of coronavirus is not as high as those seen by epidemics such as smallpox, it shows that even though our society may be technologically advanced; we are still susceptible to viruses that can cripple our world in an instant. I think this should be a humbling notice to our society to make changes in order to better be prepared in the future for another epidemic. No matter how advanced we become technologically, we are not invincible and are still vulnerable to viruses that are beyond human control. At the time of the smallpox epidemic, our technology was miniscule compared to the technology our society has now, yet we managed to persevere and survive that crippling disease which should give us hope that this too will pass us one day. We are living through history that people will learn about years from now and I hope that in that future society, they learn from the mistakes and successes we endured during these troubling times in order for society to be able to handle another epidemic with better success than we have.