REFLECTION ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The effects of the Coronavirus have been both physically and mentally traumatizing for most people. Due to its unexpected nature, it has caused people to adjust to its unforeseen circumstances. From shutting down businesses and college campuses to rapid decline in food/supply resources, people of all age groups have been tremendously affected by it. In my case, this virus affected both my mental and physical health as a whole.

Unlike most students, I did not start my journey at UCLA as a freshman. In fact, I spent nearly 75 percent of my time at a community college in the Bay Area and transferred in the Fall of 2019. With as much effort as possible, I did whatever it took to get into this university. From my extracurriculars to my grades, I worked my hardest to showcase my true potential to UCLA admissions. When April of 2019 had arrived, something I had never expected happened; I had gotten into UCLA! I was extremely excited to start my Fall quarter and knew that the experiences I would have at this university would be unforgettable. This was exactly the case. I had a wonderful time during my first two quarters at UCLA. I met so many amazing people, ate delicious dining hall foods, and had a splendid overall student-life experience. However, this had completely changed in late Winter of 2020 when the school had announced that students, unless they were unable to, were required to leave their dorms and go back to their homes. It was at this point where I knew my life was not about to be the same.

After coming back to the Bay for two weeks, I automatically felt something was different. For one, it felt unnatural seeing people wearing masks everywhere I went. It was this realization that made me further realize that this pandemic was more serious than I thought it would be. Due to the various measures imposed on people both nationally and locally, people were expected to adapt and follow various health safety protocols which included social distancing, wearing masks when going outside and hand washing and sanitization. However,
despite these implementations, this did not decrease the cases of those affected by the
Coronavirus and ultimately caused more panic in society overall. For example, essential items
such as toilet paper, napkin rolls, hand sanitizer, and disinfectants were nearly always
unavailable at stores. Every time I would go to Costco, Safeway (equivalent to Ralphs in LA), or
any other supermarket, these items were always unavailable and made it incredibly hard for not
only my family, but families all over the United States to obtain. If by chance the supermarket
did have these goods, there was often restrictions to how much quantity people could buy. As a
result, buying in bulk was incredibly difficult to achieve. However, if desperately needed, my
parents would often order these items online for which the prices were heavily inflated; a box of
toilet paper rolls that would typically cost $12 max would be $30. This is a serious problem
especially for those who were unemployed and were finding it hard to support their families.
However, I am highly thankful for my mother who planned everything way ahead and had
bought essential items before I even came back home from Los Angeles. As a result, one way the
Coronavirus affected my family and other people’s families was the inaccessibility of essential
goods which was often restricted and were inflated.

In respect to how the Coronavirus affected my life personally, so far in this global
pandemic, I have gone through immense physical and mental distress. For one, the entire
circumstance of the Coronavirus caused me to leave UCLA without saying a proper “goodbye”
to my closest friends. The friends I have made at UCLA were people who have been there for me
through thick and thin. They were always there for me in times of trouble and distress and were
people who I truly cared about. They were the ones who made my time at UCLA so great and
made it feel like “home away from home”. When news spread that it was essential for people to
leave due to the Coronavirus outbreak, many of my friends’ family members forced them to
leave ASAP, thus making it impossible for us to meet for the last time. Not only that, but one of my friends who I considered to be my closest friend (and was my suitemate), was going to graduate in the Spring quarter. As a result, this pandemic caused me to lose one of my closest friends and caused me to be excluded from the rest. Even though I potentially have the opportunity of meeting my friends from UCLA in the future, the experiences we used to have such as in the Fall, such as walking to campus, eating food together after classes, and late-night studying would not be the same. Personally, the thing that scares me the most about this pandemic is its longevity and whether or not Fall 2020 will be able to open once again. I am incredibly scared with the potentiality that I will not be able to see the rest of my friends ever again. It is that fear that has caused me to feel more anxious and concerned for the future where I would often overthink if I will ever be able to go back to UCLA.

Besides the impact the Coronavirus has had on my friendships, another impact it has had on my life is in terms of my education, or specifically adapting to online classes. For one, the entire experience has been concerning for me. For example, there has definitely been days where I have felt unmotivated to do the work assigned by my professors. Even though I am someone who is always focused on my work, this quarter, I found it incredibly frustrating to catch up on and learn the material. In comparison to in person classes, I found it more intimidating to ask professors questions in zoom meetings and, in some sense, felt more self-aware; to me, this was mentally draining. Not only that, but in many of the zoom classes I was in, I found it impossible to ask professors for clarification because of the fear that I would be judged. On top of that, another issue that I had to deal with because of online classes was the fact that some of my professors did not have zoom meetings and instead gave long readings for which the students were expected to learn from. For me, I found this incredibly frustrating because I felt like there
was way too much information for me to handle and I honestly felt unmotivated to catch up. Not only that, but considering the fact that the material that I am learning in my history courses is very condense and, in some sense, intimidating to learn, I felt as though I did not learn anything from the classes I took this quarter versus the in person classes I took in the Fall and Winter. Overall, I believe many students currently relate to my situation and have dealt with the same emotional response I have faced since the closure of universities and schools have been both nation and worldwide.

As someone who is quite health conscious, the coronavirus has definitely affected my physical health. Growing up, I was a chubby kid and was always self-aware of my weight and body image. However, as I grew up, eventually I started to adapt a healthier lifestyle which included going to the gym three times a week and restricting certain foods from my diet. However, even though I still continue to do the latter, ever since the Coronavirus pandemic entered my life, I have not been able to continue that lifestyle I used to have. This used to include going to the gym at least 3 times a week where I would often do high intensity workouts. However, ever since the pandemic occurred and California’s government restricted public spaces, this ultimately caused me to gain weight as a result. Even though I often go on runs and still do at home workouts, I do not have the same motivation as I do when I am at the gym. Ever since the mandatory stay at home order was implemented, I found myself home most of the time which contributed to becoming lazier as a result. In conclusion, the effect of the pandemic was the fact that it decreased my physical health by limiting my overall activity which can be damaging. This is an issue that is also affecting people worldwide because of the fact that people are too cautious about leaving their homes in order to protect themselves from the virus. As a
result, many people have been dealing with the same consequences as I have in regard to their health and has made it harder for people to overall maintain their health.

Through history, we have the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past and, hopefully, improve towards the future. Similar pandemics have not just happened recently in American history, in fact, during the time of the 16th to 19th century, America has undergone through various epidemics and pandemics that is similar to what is happening today. Prior to the invasion of the European peoples, Native Americans in America were not exposed to various diseases that the European people had faced back in Europe. It was not until the late 17th century to 18th century were the Europeans exposed the Native Americans with various diseases including the smallpox that ultimately decreased a large majority of Native American population. It was through these diseases that the Europeans had brought over which ultimately reduced the population size of Native Americans and ultimately increased their mortalities. This is similar to what had happened in the case of the Coronavirus for which a foreign disease had come from a different country (which in today’s case was China) and eventually spread from one person to another, which eventually led to a pandemic being formed.

Overall, based on the current situations of the Coronavirus, I believe that it will take a while for things to go back to how they used to be. Even though both local and national governments have implemented strict health measures, I believe the only way for this pandemic to end is if every single human being on this earth follows restrictions such as quarantining and wearing masks in public. I understand that people are incredibly tired of these restrictions imposed on them, and due to this, there are people who do not follow these measures and thus make it harder this pandemic to diminish. However, I do not believe that this pandemic will diminish just by implanting health measures such as washing hands or wearing masks, instead I
strongly believe that it is important to not only create a vaccine, but to give access to everyone as much as possible. I believe that once we become biologically immune to this disease, then we will be able to provide our future generations the opportunity to stay away from this disease in the future. However, this does not guarantee that there will not be another pandemic that may arise in the future, which I am positive will occur. Be it another wave of the coronavirus or not, I believe that in the future, there will be another wave of a different form of pandemic. However, the only way I believe this can be prevented is by continuously following proper health protocols, and vast availability of testing, I believe these may be the factors that could potentially avoid the next pandemic from arising. As a result, I hope that soon a vaccine for the Coronavirus comes out, however, I also hope that we learn from the mistakes we have made that further contributed to the spread of the virus.