

COVID-19 PERSONAL REFLECTION

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As countries worldwide have continued to develop and grow, almost every society has found a more prosperous life compared to any time in history. With the new technological age, advanced innovations to further economic growth, and many more developments all around the world have created an atmosphere in which the individual can find hope for a better future. Although the world we live in enables great prosperity, it is never that black and white.

In 2019, the world as we know it changed drastically with the news about a pandemic occurring in China, eventually striking the world in 2020 with the birth of the coronavirus known as COVID-19. Thought to be caused from the consumption or interaction with bats in China, many within the United States believed the virus was something little to be worried about, merely believing it would only affect countries abroad. As 2020 progressed, the problem China was facing became a worldwide pandemic, establishing chaos in the lives of millions and utterly destroying the majority of economies worldwide. Once COVID-19 took its full effects, there were less people unaffected compared to those that had their lives completely altered. I personally have seen the disastrous effects of this virus unhinged my life in many ways, affecting my personal life as well as the world around me, paving a path for a different future.

My name is Joseph D'Eredita and I am a third year Economics student at the University of California, Los Angeles. On campus, I currently am a part of the Sigma Chi, Delta Eta Chapter as well as a camp counselor for Camp Kesem, an organization that provides a free week long summer camp to kids that have either dealt with or are currently dealing with a parent's cancer. Apart from UCLA, I live with my uncle, sister, cousin and grandmother in San Francisco, California. Overall, I would say that I have lived a good life with a loving family and a very fortunate education, so when COVID-19 crept into my life, I never understood or even

imagined the impacts that it would take, merely regarding it as a “normal flu” that goes around each year. As it became an epidemic, my life and the way of life throughout the world changed before my eyes, drastically bringing negative consequences to every aspect of society.

Personally, I have been negatively affected by COVID-19 both at school and in my daily life. At UCLA, every part of the established structure that I once had vanished once the virus took its full effect. Impacting the structure of college campuses nationwide, COVID-19 forced UCLA to turn completely online, starting with Spring quarter of the 2019-2020 school year to now, reaching as far out in the future as Fall quarter for the 2020-2021 school year. With rigorous college coursework fully online, I have found it almost impossible to stay on track and to have the same level of drive that I once found in the classroom environment. With emails flowing in like a river from professors and school officials and classwork scattered on multiple online platforms, organization alone has become a daily struggle, only making UCLA coursework exponentially more difficult to handle. On top of that, my fraternity house was robbed twice within a 20 day period, something that has been more frequent since everyone has moved back home. Unfortunately, I was left in awe as two of my laptops were stolen; when the first laptop was stolen, I absolutely panicked as everything I needed for the upcoming online quarter was lost, but when my second one was taken only days later, I thought my quarter was over. Loaded with stress as I was without a device to complete online coursework at UCLA, the additive stress the virus was placing on my daily life furthered the disastrous effects COVID-19 was managing to implement into lives everywhere as the virus became worse and worse.

As I live with my uncle and grandmother back at home in the Bay Area, my siblings and I have had to stay out of the house since December of 2019. When the virus initially started, my

family never thought that we would be forced to stay apart this long. Since my grandmother recently turned 90 years old and has had a past with immune deficiencies, my uncle made the executive decision to have no one come home. With that, he is now forced to take every cautionary measure to protect not only himself, but now her life as she is extremely at risk. With such a change in lifestyle, my family has been very worried about her overall safety and the overall well being of one another as it is affecting us all differently. For me, it has been extremely difficult to not be able to see my family as everyone around me is escaping the virus through the comfort of their own home and family. Stuck at school, I have tried to make the best of it, but COVID-19 has made sure that won't happen. Since my second year at UCLA, I have worked for ASUCLA Catering, an on campus, student run organization, allowing me to find income security to finance my daily life activities and necessities throughout college. When COVID-19 struck, I was forced out of employment, bringing my income to zero and placing me in very difficult financial times. On top of that, I found hope for employment through a summer internship opportunity, but was taken away when they cancelled the program four months before the start date. Faced with unemployment for the last 4 months and potentially continuing for months into the future, the foundation that I built myself upon at UCLA has completely crumbled during these past months. As COVID-19 has completely altered my current life and potentially my future as well, the epidemic has struck the world and other individuals in much more drastic measures.

With COVID-19 controlling every aspect of society, our daily lives have fundamentally shifted into a new way of life. For instance, to combat the spread of coronavirus, the world has turned to mass quarantine or the attempt to have every person stay at home while the virus is still

actively spreading. Due to the virus affecting people differently, quarantine has been a useful method to combat the spreading, but it is also a very difficult task to place on an entire population. Since many young healthy individuals face almost zero risk from coronavirus, the prolonged quarantine has been difficult, resulting in many disobeying the orders to get back their past way of life. On the contrary, this is the only solution for the elderly, the immune deficient, and other groups that face drastic consequences, even potentially ending in death if the virus is contracted, similar to the smallpox epidemic faced within Spanish history during the Siege of Tenochtitlan. While some of the Spaniards and indigenous people were able to make a recovery from the disease, others found themselves facing no other choice than death. For them, there wasn't any social structure to rightfully combat the virus, therefore to mitigate the risk for those that can not afford contracting the virus, entire populations must abide by the same social orders.

Moreover, if individuals have to leave their homes, it is required that they wear a face mask at all times and remain more than six feet apart from one another. Concerts, sporting events, graduations, schools, churches, and many more fundamental ways of life have completely shut down with the implementation of these new social boundaries. Societies all around the world are still in states of panic and the unknown nature of COVID-19 could bring further social changes globally that many have never imagined.

As 2020 moves forward, nations worldwide have attempted to implement new policies in order to combat the unknown nature of COVID-19. With many different nations experiencing different levels of the virus and therefore regulation, the political atmosphere worldwide is chaotic. For instance, countries in Africa, Asia, and Australia have seen lower death rates compared to countries globally. Moreover, countries such as the United States, China, and Italy

have seen prolonged periods of stay at home orders within major cities, requiring governmental action. For instance, in Los Angeles, California Governor Gavin Newsom enacted stay at home orders, fully shutting down non-essential business and the normal way of life. For many, these actions were crucial, mitigating the overall risk that certain groups within society cannot take. On the contrary, other groups of people have lashed out, claiming that these political orders are unfair to even claims of unconstitutional. In Huntington Beach for example, groups of people have begun protesting against the stay at home orders, packing the streets and ultimately taking the risk of COVID-19 as a choice. Personally, that is hard to watch on TV knowing that I have not been able to see my family in over seven months as my grandmother is highly at risk, but other people think it is their “privilege” to pack the streets and freely spread COVID-19. Due to the heightened unknown nature behind the coronavirus, political leaders have attempted to implement the best actions for society, but it has definitely been a struggle overall to come together as a world to face a common problem.

Taking one of the worst impacts from COVID-19 is the global economy. Once steady trends of economic well being throughout many countries worldwide during the early 2010s, 2020 brought economic crises, ultimately one that could measure up against past experiences such as the Great Depression and the Financial Crisis of 2008 once this is all over. Within months, businesses worldwide were forced to close their doors, resulting not only in many businesses forced out of business, but more employment opportunities than ever have left the market within merely a six month period. Almost every industry besides the healthcare industry has seen huge drawbacks in employment to even stopping business altogether. The government has attempted to combat the failing economy by providing relief funds to small businesses as

well as individuals in order to provide aid, but as COVID-19 continues to negatively impact the economy, government regulation can only go so far.

With hope for the future and learning from the impacts of COVID-19, I personally believe the future holds a different way of life. An increase in sanitary measures should be implemented in all aspects of life, whether that be door thermometer checks, decreasing the maximum occupancy in buildings, to even accessible hand sanitizer could play a huge role in creating a healthier environment for the community. Also, the act of sharing might once be one of the past for most people, never fully trusting the sanitation of everyone around them. Sharing a snack with a friend or giving someone a drink of water will become things that I believe will attract strange looks once the quarantine is over. In my opinion, I hope the world learns from this and emerges with the understanding of how important coming together as a nation really is. We have been in times of political unrest with many groups fiercely debating over topics that impact the majority. Instead, we need to learn from how important it was that once we came together, we have been able to make steps to move past COVID-19 and its terrible effects. I think we can ultimately come together as a nation and realize how important that is in fighting a common enemy such as COVID-19.