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Second Essay

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In recent months, the advent of the Coronavirus and its effects on the economic, physical, and mental aspects of people around the world have been tremendous. It is evident that Coronavirus didn't damage peoples' lives not only because it affected their health, but it also caused serious blows on their financial stability. The economy itself has significantly slowed down because businesses shut their doors due to the contagious nature of the Coronavirus. The hardship caused by the Coronavirus is not exclusive to the United States, as the whole world is facing its challenge. In the past couple of months, the change of social consciousness about the Coronavirus was dramatic, and following the consciousness, some extreme measures were taken to prevent the spreading of the virus. There were some notable benefits and deficits caused by the quarantine, and these factors can be heavily varied by each person. Personal benefit from the quarantine was that the residing place became flexible, meaning that educational institutions launched online courses and church services became available online, granting freedom to reside anywhere. Also, as a person who struggles with mental health and who identifies oneself as an introvert, the quarantine gave plenty of time to self-reflect and to take a break from social gatherings. The deficit was a constant anxiety to have any contact with people, and the basic activities and leisures outside of home became less available. Also, struggles of businesses and job loss caused by the virus were immense. Although time has passed and the resources such as technology and medicine made a big leap from the past, Coronavirus served as a warning sign that the pandemic still is a big threat to the society and that the infrastructure of modern society needs improvement to combat the future pandemics more efficiently.

The problem of Coronavirus was rampant not only in the United States but also in other countries. The anxiety and measures to prevent the virus from spreading were prevalent. The

social distancing, quarantine, and wearing a mask became requirements. Having family members in South Korea, it was natural to get in touch with personal situations in South Korea and the United States. In the States, experience with the Coronavirus initially didn't seem to be too serious. Although there were words around that the virus erupted, schools still proceeded to hold physical meetings on the campus. There were a couple of messages regarding that some students and staff members at UCLA were infected by Coronavirus, however, there was no real action taken until March 11th, 2020. Before the said date, it felt as if the staff and the students weren't fully aware of the situation yet, and the campus was still packed with people. However, when Chancellor Gene D. Block gave an official statement regarding the Coronavirus, the online class launched, and the winter quarter's final exams were announced to be taken at home. This was when the quarantine lifestyle officially started.

The transition from ordinary life to the quarantine felt very sudden, however, the implementation of quarantine was expected. This was expected because there was a huge exposure from other countries acting more drastically than the States, and seeing these countries, it was evident that the United States will eventually follow the same measures. South Korea, for example, is very susceptible to the latest news, and for this reason, they quickly adapted to their new situation. Social media such as Instagram showed various scenarios where everyday people were affected by the virus. When rarely anyone bothered to wear facial masks or to keep social distance in the States, in Korea there were countless posts regarding people taking extreme measures to wear masks and to get tested. Reading through a plethora of posts made in Korea regarding the virus was a bitter experience. At one point the price of the mask inflated into the

extreme, costing nearly two-hundred US dollars for a single mask¹, and such a situation prevented many people from getting a mask and condemned for not wearing a mask. Consuming such information daily created personal concerns for the family members residing in Korea.

The public awareness of the Coronavirus struck the mainstream media earlier in South Korea, so family members in Korea experienced the circumstances of the Coronavirus earlier. Although the impact of the virus was initially taken to be more grave in Korea than the United States, the table quickly turned when Korea started to actively give infection tests to the public.² For these reasons, Korea is currently heralded globally for its swift and active response to the pandemic, and from the actions that Korea took seems to reduce the number of infections. Because Korea was seeing such positive results, worries for the family members quickly subsided, and interestingly family members transitioned to worry about the situation in the States because they knew that Los Angeles and Orange County were vulnerable to Coronavirus.

Symptoms of depression and anxiety have become one of the biggest pandemics in the United States, estimating about 17.3 million adults in the U.S. experiencing at least one depressive episode, and for this reason, the social awareness of mental health has become prevalent more than ever.³ Being part of this percentage, the quarantine had its benefits and deficits. First, the benefit of the quarantine was that pace of life became significantly slower. The quarantine allowed people to get away from social and fast-paced life, and room for a personal

¹ Lee, Hakyung Kate. "South Korea Takes New Measures to Have Enough Face Masks Domestically amid Coronavirus." ABC News. ABC News Network. Accessed May 19, 2020.

² Breen, Michael. "What's Fueling South Korea's Coronavirus Success - and Relapse." POLITICO. Accessed May 19, 2020.

³ "Major Depression." National Institute of Mental Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Accessed May 19, 2020.

time became more available as people were limiting their distance from each other. For some, the isolation was painful, however, personally having seven people in one household, isolation didn't seem relevant. After the quarantine and online courses were implemented, many people moved away from the campus because their physical presence was no longer required. This opportunity to get away from Los Angeles to Irvine was beneficial in multiple ways. First, getting away from Los Angeles was a positive experience because it enabled to escape from expensive and dirty apartments. Doing schoolwork in Irvine, where there are family and friends, was a more mentally suitable place than Los Angeles. Second, there was financial stability because there was no need to pay for the high-priced L.A. expenses, and this relieved the stress that comes with financial management. Although the forced isolation may have contributed to the physical weight gain, mentally the quarantine served as a personal benefit.

Having this transition was an odd experience because the seriousness of the Coronavirus took a sharp turn within a couple of weeks, and this was evident seeing all shops closing and supermarkets running out of their stocks. Also, gaining access to basic supplies became difficult. There were a couple of items that became very difficult to acquire, and the most infamous item was toilet paper.⁴ People began to panic as soon as the quarantine became official, and many of them started to hoard toilet papers, making it extremely difficult for the rest to get some. So for a while, there was a fear in the household that the toilet paper supply would run out. For the first couple weeks, the only way to get toilet papers was to go to the grocery store as soon as it opened, so when people in the local community got the chance to get them, toilet papers were

⁴ McCue, T.J. "2020 Toilet Paper Crisis And What To Do If You Run Out." Forbes. Forbes Magazine, March 24, 2020.

often shared. Because of the difficulty of gaining some of these items, some small communities such as apartment complexes formed a place where people can share goods.

As mentioned previously, any social gatherings became online, and this included church services. Church activities are a huge part of the personal life, going to church about three to four times a week. Social life relies heavily on the church, so having the remote service during the pandemic helped the social life to continue. It was mentioned often from the online media that many people were struggling in this pandemic due to loneliness, however, because of seven roommates and online church service, social life before and during quarantine didn't feel too different. Also, having a church gathering online was an interesting experience. When the online service started there were many technical challenges but as time passed the proficiency of managing technology got notably better, and this advance in management didn't only apply to churches but almost in all meetings held online. This served as a personal indicator that people were adjusting to the lifestyle of the quarantine.

The modern times global pandemic situation helped to reflect on the plagues that the Spaniards experienced in the past. The Iberians have a lengthy history with the plagues, and just like how the Coronavirus shaped the social and economic aspects of the modern people, the plague also impacted the economic and social aspects of the Iberians. In the 14th century, a plague known as the Black Death entered western Europe from the East through merchant ships. The damage that the bubonic plague had on Europe was devastating, killing almost one-third to one-half of the population in Europe. The plague is assumed to have reached Spain through the eastern and southern ports.⁵ The impact that the plague had on Spain didn't only end with deaths,

⁵ Ruiz Teófilo F. *Spains Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011. 45

but it severely reduced the material transactions and created civil disturbances. Also, in the sixteenth century, Cocoliztli epidemics, one of the epidemics that the Spaniards spread to the natives, was considered as one of the worst epidemics in Mexico's history, killing millions of people. Although the bubonic plague and Cocoliztli was more serious in terms of lethality, one can still draw a parallel from the past to the present. The slowdown of the economy and the cause of the epidemic was strikingly similar to that of the Coronavirus. The sad truth is that although technology and medicine significantly developed since the 14th and 16th century, the system today, just that of Iberian, still wasn't ready to face the pandemic. Coronavirus caused mass panic and left a disastrous dent on the economy. The accessibility of medical examinations wasn't available to everyone, and there was an estimation of 26 million jobs lost in just 5 weeks of Coronavirus, causing President Trump to reconsider forcibly reopening the economy despite warnings from the health experts.⁶ From the past and present pandemics, hopefully people today wouldn't look back to the plagues of the past as just an event of antiquity and learn that there is a need for improvement in our system to withstand pandemics in the future.

Overall, being an introvert and having all the supplies and people needed, quarantine experience didn't feel like a pain, rather it felt like a familiar lifestyle. Being a student, the financial and health turmoil that many experienced during this pandemic didn't feel tangible, and in some circumstances especially those that involved mental health, the quarantine even felt beneficial. However, although the pandemic didn't affect personal life, the impact that Coronavirus had in the world was evident. Also, the Coronavirus reminded the pandemic issue

⁶ Tankersley, Jim, Maggie Haberman, and Roni Caryn Rabin. "Trump Considers Reopening the Economy, Over Health Experts' Objections." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, March 24, 2020.

that the Iberians and the natives faced in the past and how the improvement in the infrastructure is desperately needed to prevent future pandemics.

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