

Manuel Alcantar-Robles

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History 129A

Professor Ruiz

The Uncertainties of Our Life Time: Covid-19

Diseases and pandemics are nothing new to world history after all previous civilizations have been devastated before by these catastrophic occurrences. One of the worst diseases to ever strike humans was the introduction of smallpox in the Americas. This disease wiped out millions and completely destroyed indigenous populations all throughout Latin America. Today myself and millions around the world are affected by a novel virus named Covid-19. While millions have not died like those from previous deadly plagues and diseases coronavirus has still impacted many people and has completely changed our day to day life. Coronavirus has affected me and my career goals significantly as well as affecting my family. My community both at UCLA and back home has also suffered from the laws that have been put in place to protect us from the coronavirus. I believe that this virus will completely change humanity, from new regulations set in place to the way we greet each other as humans.

At the beginning of this year, my junior year, I had many plans and goals that I wanted to accomplish before ending the year. One of my plans this year was to leave more time and energy for my friends and clubs that I had distanced myself from due to the pressure of work that I had last year. I wanted to make my junior year one for friends since I had noticed that during my freshman and sophomore years I spent too much time in the library doing work so I told myself I would do everything possible to hang out with my friends. For the most part, I was able to do this yet once the coronavirus hit I realized that for this quarter it would not be possible. I would not be able to cheer on for all my friends graduating this year. I instead would have to sit at home and wait for their virtual graduation. Another thing I was looking forward to this year was to take my younger brother to his college visiting day at UC Santa Cruz. My brother is only the second

person in our entire extended family to attend college so this was a big deal for him. One of the fondest memories I hold about UCLA was my first time to ever stand next to Royce Hall with my family and think to myself “Yup you finally made it to college”. I wanted to share this experience with my brother because I know that it would mean the world to him. He might not even have that experience anytime soon due to the many regulations that have been set in place. Beyond being there for my friends and family this year I was also looking forward to many of my career and academic plans to begin to take off.

One of the uncertainties that coronavirus brought to me was the possibility of finding a summer internship. For the past two summers, I had worked manual labor jobs that were extremely hard and did not provide much help for my academic career. This year I told myself I would find an internship with a decent salary to pay for some of my own college expenses and gain some priceless experience in my field. I already had several applications in and was hoping that I could get accepted into at least one of them. Yet slowly and steadily I noticed that many of them were beginning to cancel their programs due to the coronavirus. My hopes for finding an internship crashed immediately and left me to wonder what was next. I have been frantically applying to the few internships that I can find yet they all seem to have the same warning. Many state that the positions are at odds due to the coronavirus and that it could potentially be canceled. I am attempting to come to terms with the fact that I might not be able to get an internship. Yet this is only one of the uncertainties that coronavirus has put into my life.

The biggest academic goal that I have had since I was in high school, was to attend law school. I have been preparing for this moment for nearly five years and at the beginning of this year, I was excited because this was the year I would begin all of my preparations before

applying. From studying for the LSAT to attending class and office hours in hope of maintaining good connections with my professors so that later on in the year I could ask for letters of recommendation. While everything was running smoothly for the first two quarters once the coronavirus hit I realized that some of these plans might not come to fruition as I thought they would. Connecting with professors and forming genuine relationships would now become a little harder. Attending class in person is now not possible and might not be for some time to come. I personally prefer to be in a classroom because I tend to learn easier and not get distracted by my siblings, parents, or even social media. Having to take online classes is also a struggle because of the faulty internet connection I have. Oftentimes when I attempt to load videos or join zoom lectures I find myself lagging or freezing up during the lecture. While I know that it is not the greatest of problems it is still an inconvenience that would be of no issue if I was on campus. Beyond just classes and connecting with professors the coronavirus has also affected my dream of law school with regards to taking the LSAT and applying to law schools. This process is extremely expensive and coming from a low-income background affects the way I can study for the exam and the range of schools I would like to apply to. Since many internships have been canceled, finding a way to pay for these would become harder. With the world economy struggling due to this pandemic I have begun to ask myself if my dream of attending law school is even a wise decision. World leaders and health officials seem to be at odds with when the economy will be able to open back up to normality and whether universities and other institutions will remain online. I begin to wonder if attending law school and amounting more debt is a wise decision in these times of uncertainty.

My family has also been affected by the coronavirus in many ways and I can see the frustrations that it has placed on them. I come from a deeply religious family and they spend a huge chunk of their time in church. Due to many of the stay at home regulations churches have completely closed down. In the process, Sunday Mass, Friday confessions, and Wednesday prayer nights have all been closed for them. While my parents can pray at home for them it is simply not the same. I have spoken to them about this issue and they constantly share their frustrations with me about not being able to attend church. I realized how much this affected them during Holy Week, which is the most important week for Catholic people around the world. They were bummed out and quiet all week as they attempted their best to watch online mass and continue our annual traditions. Even though they attempted to make it the best experience for our entire family they confessed that it simply did not feel right. These frustrations I have seen at home can also be seen around my community and the world for a variety of different reasons.

One of the communities I hold dearest to my heart is that of my local church's youth group. We would typically meet up every Friday night with many youths from the community. We held different events that ranged from carnivals to raise funds to food drives. This is now not possible and I know that my youth group is frustrated by this lack of activity. Beyond just my community people across the country and the world are desperate to open everything back up. While precautions must be taken into place to ensure safety I understand how badly people are wanting for this to be over. Many businesses have shut down because they have been closed for too long and cannot afford to stay afloat. Many people have contracted the virus and countless people have unfortunately passed away. The death toll has been one of the most depressing

things to witness as it continues to rise throughout the entire world. So many lives gone in such a small span of time seems absurd yet this is the price that has been paid due to this virus. While it is not the first time this has happened in history it differs so much from reading about it in a history textbook to actually witnessing what is going on. It is sometimes hard to wrap my head around the fact that this virus has taken so many lives.

The social chaos and loss of life that we have seen today, while not as drastic, can be compared to that of smallpox coming to the New World. The arrival of Spaniards to the New World brought many diseases that Indigenous people were not ready for. Many indigenous people in the New World died from smallpox. Today we have seen thousands of deaths as well and it is hard, even for modern medicine, to create a cure for coronavirus so that this senseless loss of life is stopped. While the indigenous economy was destroyed by the looting of the Spaniards and massive loss of life, today we suffer from closed stores and huge unemployment numbers. The arrival of both of these diseases brought social panic everywhere as people attempted to find ways of curing the disease and stop the deaths. The huge unemployment rates have caused panic and protests as people are desperate to return to their jobs so they can pay for rent and feed their children. I know that today we have not suffered as much as the indigenous people back then but many of their struggles are paralleled today. Their resilience not only against the disease but against Iberian colonizers should, in my opinion, be looked up to in these troubling times.

As to what my future holds I am not certain, but I am confident that just like in previous times I will be able to power through. I will continue to try and reach out to my friends from back home and at UCLA by offering them support in these harsh times. My family is

strong-willed and I know that they will be able to overcome these tough times and continue to work hard in order to provide for us. I will continue to reach for my goals and hope that everything clears out soon and maybe I will be able to land an internship. There have been many times during this pandemic where I have wanted to give up due to how unpredictable my future seems. While I wish to say that if this were to ever happen again I would try to be prepared for it, that would probably never work out. For a global future, I see many changes being made from the way we greet people to the way we eat at restaurants. I can envision a future where shaking hands is no longer viewed as a necessary way to introduce yourself to someone new. I can also see places where many people are present establishing rules of how close one can stand next to another person. I am positive that once the world gets out of this fight governments and institutions will put in place laws that will help prevent pandemics of this kind. Even if it means that we have to practice social distancing for years to come I would like to see the world out of this problem. While writing this paper many memories of fun times with my family and friends were running through my head. While it has only been a couple of months under quarantine I still miss these memories and the people that they were shared with. Yet I know that all of this is happening in order to save lives which makes me realize that it is all worth it. I would rather spend a few more months under quarantine then risk the lives of people who are vulnerable. We have overcome similar events before and I know that this battle against coronavirus will be no different. I look forward to looking at these moments in history books of the future and leave all of this behind.

