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HIST 129A

Essay Two: Prompt 4 – COVID-19 Reflection

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There is no doubt that our way of lives have been greatly impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. From rich to poor, politician to fast-food worker, young to old, the pandemic does not discriminate against anyone. Although the pandemic has presented a number of challenging obstacles for myself, my family, and my community, I am grateful for it as it has been a powerful teaching moment for me, and it has allowed me to reflect on different aspects of my life.

A major challenge that has risen for me as a result of the pandemic is the fact that all learning has become remote. I thoroughly enjoy being in a classroom setting for a number of reasons. First, the physical setting of a classroom provides me with the motivation to go to class and to do well. Because all of my classes are online now, there is no one or nothing forcing me to go to class, and my motivation has decreased as a result. Second, I find that I learn better in a physical classroom partly due to the interactions that take place between the professor and students. From what I have observed in the first seven weeks of the Spring 2020 Quarter, there is little interaction between the professor and the students in my classes. Consequently, classes easily become boring and difficult to follow along to. On the bright side, one advantage of remote learning is that it has provided me with a great deal of time. Sure, I have spent most of this extra time playing video games and watching television, but I have begun to manage my time better by starting to work on assignments a couple of weeks in advance. By doing this, I have become more motivated to work on assignments and to put 100 percent effort into doing so because at the end of the day, whether classes are online or in-person, my motivation to succeed should not change.

Another challenge for me that has resulted from this pandemic has to do with my physical and mental health. I take my physical health very seriously. Before the pandemic, I

would wake up at 5 a.m. every Monday through Friday to go to the gym. Working out is important to me as it provides me with discipline as well as a way to deal with stressors. Also, working out helps me do well in school because it strengthens my motivation to succeed. One can think of it as a domino effect. Waking up early in the morning allows me to be productive throughout the day which increases my motivation to do well in classes as well as my work as a student equipment manager for the UCLA football team. However, because gyms are closed now, I have become lazy and have not kept the same routine of waking up at 5 a.m. to work out. As a result, I have become less disciplined, which is an important value to me as it is what drives me to succeed. Without discipline, I have become less motivated to do well in my classes. In order to combat this, I have begun to go on nightly walks. This not only helps my physical health but my mental health as well because I am able to reflect on my day. These reflections have assisted me in gaining my motivation back.

As to my family, I am grateful that the COVID-19 pandemic has not had much of a financial impact. My mom, dad, and brother are still able to work and earn a paycheck during these difficult times. I cannot imagine what families, whose parents are unable to work, are going through at the moment. However, my family is still having to adjust to the challenges presented by the pandemic. For example, my older sister who was working as a volunteer for the Peace Corps in Peru had to be brought back to the United States and is currently living with my parents. When she arrived at my parents' house, all three of them had to spend two weeks in quarantine with limited outside exposure. At first, my sister was obviously sad with this revelation. She was enjoying her time in Peru because she had the opportunity to experience a different culture. Coming back home meant being in a city she did not want to live in for an extended period of time. It also meant living with my parents for an extended period. My sister

has not done so since before moving to college in 2011. However, as we all need to do, my sister has accepted this new way of life and has learned to deal with the challenges that come with it.

My mom has also experienced obstacles with this new way of life. She is a high school Spanish teacher. At the high school level, teaching remotely is difficult. This is especially the case at the high school my mom teaches at because there is a decent sized population of students who do not always have access to a meal, a computer, or the internet. I have heard on the news that many school districts across the country are ending the year early because of challenges with teaching remotely. As a Spanish teacher, my mom has found it difficult to keep her students motivated as the last thing students want to learn is Spanish grammar and vocabulary.

When reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 on my community, the pandemic has hit it hard. The locals in my community, Pueblo, CO, are a prideful people. They take pride in being from Pueblo, CO, a small town which once had a booming economy due to steel production. Locals also take pride in the high school that they graduated from in Pueblo. In fact, when my family first moved to Pueblo in 2001, people would ask my parents what school they went to. My parents answered with the universities they graduated from not knowing that they were being asked what high school they went to. Unfortunately because of COVID-19, all high school graduations in Pueblo have become virtual. This has caused an uproar from students as well as their families because of how important graduating from high school is to them. For some students in Pueblo, a high school education is all they might receive, so not having the opportunity to walk across the stage with their family watching is quite disappointing. Yes, I understand that there are more important accomplishments than graduating from high school, but as the reader you must understand that for many Puebloans, a high school graduation is a major milestone.

My community's economy has also suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic. There are a great deal of small businesses in Pueblo, CO which have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. Many people in my community have lost their jobs. Pueblo's economy has never fully recovered since the collapse of its steel industry in the 1990s. Economic progress in Pueblo is slow compared to other cities in Colorado such as Denver and Colorado Springs. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the slow economic growth in Pueblo.

Moving on to the country and the world in general, the pandemic has meant putting a hold on our normal lives and coming together to help those in need. Many professional athletes have donated a portion of their salaries to food banks to ensure that everyone has a warm meal on their table. In the sports world, a challenge known as the "COVID-19 All-In Challenge" has surfaced in which professional athletes auction off an activity to the highest bidder. For example, Peyton Manning, a former quarterback in the NFL, offered an opportunity to play golf with him. All of the proceeds made during this challenge will go toward people on the frontline of the pandemic as well as families in need. Furthermore, state governments are working together to develop strategies on fighting COVID-19 as well as an action plan dealing with when to reopen each states' economy. On April 27, 2020, Colorado and Nevada joined the Western States Pact, which was originally comprised of California, Oregon, and Washington. Yes, COVID-19 has proved to be a deadly virus, but a positive outcome of the pandemic is the fact that people, from all walks of life, have banded together to help others in a stressful time.

Looking onto the future, it is difficult to imagine what life will look like. There are so many questions that are difficult to answer. For example, what if the country's economy reopens and there is a second outbreak? Will COVID-19 ever go away or will it be a permanent virus that comes around seasonally? How will the country and the world handle future pandemics as a

result of the COVID-19 pandemic? These are important questions because they will spark reflection and require teamwork to solve them. Besides these questions, local, state, and world economies cannot open up right away. It is going to take some time for this world to heal, and we cannot rush the process. Economies cannot reopen with a snap of the finger. They must slowly be revived by opening certain businesses that are deemed safe at one time. The best analogy for this is a sports injury. When an athlete has an injury, it takes time for such to heal. It may be a slow process but it is better to make sure that the injury is fully healed than to rush back into competing again and compromising the progress. The world will return to normalcy, but it will take time and an effort from all people to do their part. With the COVID-19 pandemic, risk is not worth the reward. Safety and the well-being of people are of the utmost importance right now. The COVID-19 pandemic should not be taken lightly.

It will be interesting to see how schools, at all different levels, react to COVID-19 in the future. It seems as if a great deal of universities are moving to remote learning for Fall 2020. College is an important time of life for many students, and the fact that it will end online or start online for some students is sad. Looking at high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools, it is possible that they will follow suit. Because it is more difficult to do remote learning at these levels, strategies need to be developed in order to guarantee that students are receiving a top-of-the-line remote learning experience.

As significant as it is to reflect on the COVID-19 pandemic, it is also important to historicize this event. The COVID-19 pandemic relates to when the Spanish arrived in the new world in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Spanish brought with them horses, iron swords, and deadly diseases. One of the deadly diseases that the Spanish introduced to the new world was smallpox. Smallpox turned into a “severe epidemic spread among the Indians, who

did not know this disease” (Díaz 282). The native people were unprepared for smallpox because they knew nothing about it. As a result, indigenous populations were crippled as many native people perished from smallpox. A foreign disease completely changed the lives of the natives. The indigenous economy was decimated by smallpox. The natives possessed no knowledge of the disease and had no immunity to it, allowing smallpox to sweep through the new world. Looking at the COVID-19 pandemic, I feel that the United States and the world in general were unprepared for COVID-19, turning the disease into a pandemic. Local and federal economies along with the world economy have taken a significant hit from COVID-19. At the beginning of the outbreak, there was little knowledge of COVID-19. As a result, the disease easily spread from one country to another. Like smallpox, COVID-19 has dramatically changed the lives of many people.

With all that has been said, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on myself, my family, the United States, and the world in general. Both my physical health and mental health have been compromised by the pandemic. My family has had to adapt to change and overcome challenges. People around the world are having to adjust to a new way of life, one that involves wearing masks out in public and standing six feet apart from one another in grocery stores and other businesses. However negative this pandemic has been for many people, one must attempt to look at the positive side of it. The pandemic has brought out the best in people, as seen with how many athletes have donated their salaries to food banks, for example. I look at the pandemic as a wonderful teaching moment because it has allowed me to reflect on my life and what I can do to stay motivated during this crisis. It is also a great teaching moment in the sense that historians are able to historicize the COVID-19 pandemic by comparing it to other occasions such as the introduction of smallpox into the new world by the Spanish.

Works Cited

Díaz, Bernal. *The Conquest of New Spain*. London, Penguin Books, 1963.