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### The Tragic Year of the Century

If I would've known that entering the year 2020, the events that would follow will change our lives forever. No one believed that this virus would affect not only a country, but the entire world. In January 2020, China witnessed a variety of patients in Wuhan who all coincidentally had similar symptoms which they believed led to pneumonia. As time passed by, the number of these cases continued to grow and they all had the similar symptoms: severe fever and excessive coughing. By February, this virus was officially named COVID-19, also referred as coronavirus. The Covid-19 continued to spread through countries starting from Asia to Europe; by mid-February, Italy became the country to witness an increase of worst cases in which hundreds of people were dying every day. Around this time, the U.S. stock market started to fall and it was also in mid-February when the first coronavirus case was found in California. Since they were other cases found throughout the U.S., the government initiated travel restrictions.

It was until March when the World Health Organization characterized it as a pandemic and due to this pandemic, all sports were suspended. Europe became the epicenter of Covid-19 cases, since the major countries that were being impacted were Italy, Spain, and France. In the U.S., the major states that were being affected by the virus were New York, California, and Washington since they had the highest number of cases. There was a spread of rumors that cities, states, and maybe countries were going to be quarantined, therefore, this led to a mass panic for

shopping for necessities. People went crazy and started bombarding the markets, taking everything they could until markets had to close in order to restock. A very interesting aspect is that there was a huge lack of shortage of toilet paper and water since that was the main commodities that were being hoarded by the people. On March 19, California passed a stay-at-home order which prohibited the people from going out for any purposes except for essential workers and essential shopping. By the end of March, WHO declared the U.S. as the epicenter of the virus, which is concerning since a lot of civilians were not taking it seriously and are still not taking it seriously as of today. President Trump signed a \$2 trillion stimulus bill which meant that citizens were to receive \$1,200 for an individual and an additional \$500 per child. It is now mid-May and the coronavirus has continued to take over our lives, nothing has changed, and it has been rumored that the second wave has begun.

Although the coronavirus caught everyone by surprise, it has impacted me personally and within the community. The virus affected every household and social routines. Since the majority of non-essential stores were closed, this meant there was a high number of unemployment or people working from home. Since I live in Southern Los Angeles, it was more likely for parents to lose their jobs and had to stay home. I consider myself fortunate since I didn't have to worry about losing my job given that I was only going to school. However, as a full-time student and as a full-time mom, it was very difficult for me to juggle both school work and motherhood. I believed I was able to handle both jobs considering that I am very organized. Eventually, I became exhausted and overwhelmed over school, mom duties, and housewife duties. I was also fortunate to have a partner who still had his job, however, he was always drained (given the fact that he was an essential worker and was being outworked). I would say the Covid-19 must have not only affected our immune systems, but our mental state because in

mid-April, it became a norm for me and my partner to argue over anything. Eventually, it led to me moving out of his home and into my mother's home with my four month old baby. Three days upon my arrival to my mother's home, we found out that my uncle had caught the coronavirus. For the sake of my baby's health, I had to move into my sister's home and I honestly believed this would have been a safe haven for us since they were being extra cautious. My sister has two children who have low immune systems: one has a disability and the other has asthma. Therefore, my sister was doing the best at social isolating and disinfecting everything and everyone who came inside her home. Thinking about it now, I think it was such a coincidence that the day after I moved in the respite care nurse of my nephew had gotten news that she was exposed to her earlier patient (who tested positive in Covid-19). This obviously scared us because the last thing we ever wanted was to be exposed and in my case, I had been exposed twice so I was very afraid that my baby would catch the virus. Although they say that infants and children are less likely to catch the virus, show symptoms, or be affected by it, I would still prefer for my baby not to get the virus. Two weeks passed and we did not show any symptoms, we didn't get affected by it. Two more weeks passed, the news alerted us that babies were catching the coronavirus and they were being affected by it through severe rashes and inflammation of their throat.

Not only did I have to worry even more for my baby's safety, but I also had to worry about my assignments for school. This is my last quarter as a senior. It is so saddening that the moment I've been waiting for all my life is to graduate from UCLA and I'm not able to do so because of a pandemic crisis. On the bright side, this is the very first time in history where graduations are made virtually, however, that is still not the same and it's disappointing in my perspective. This quarter I am taking two requirement classes I need in order to graduate and an

elective, so passing these classes is very important since they determine if I am able to receive my BA this year. Seeing that I had ended my relationship, I felt so alone and overwhelmed; I had no help or anyone to care for my baby meanwhile I did my assignments. Over the past month, I had mental breakdowns and even doubted myself; I was very close to dropping out. Despite that, I had to think about my son and how proud I would make everyone to be the first child to graduate from college and as a parent as well. I learned to find my own routine with my baby, had to learn to entertain him while I did chores and homework. So in a way, Covid-19 did help me learn a new skill in managing my time and caring for my baby.

Covid-19 has made its worldwide signature by affecting our political, economic, and social life. This has created new routines in essential places, such as in markets and fast food restaurants. In any store, customers are required to wear masks at all times and in certain stores they limit the number of people inside the building. Fast food restaurants have closed the inside of their diners, but their drive thru is still open. Nonetheless, the majority of restaurants require customers to have their face masks on. Other sit downs restaurants remained closed, however they still do take-outs. All schools have also been closed and classrooms have become virtual; homework and assignments are turned electronically. I have seen my nieces officially give up on school and will not try to complete their assignments. I believe parents do not believe that children are also going through hardships and rough accommodations because I have witnessed all my nieces/nephews lose their motivation to finish this school year. These are some of the new routines that everyone has been trying to accommodate to. This also affected the country politically since the government had to make regulations and alterations to help the people who have been affected by the coronavirus. President Trump passed the CARES act which meant that a stimulus check was going to be given to all citizens who had done their taxes. They were to

receive a check of \$1,200 and an additional \$500 for every child. Although this was an aid that everyone needed, it did not benefit those who were undocumented which is very important to my community because I live in an area where it's predominantly hispanic and undocumented. I have siblings who were furloughed and fired due to the coronavirus, and did not receive a stimulus check. Society has also acted the worst since the Covid-19 made its entrance to the United States. Since everything has been closed for months (hair salons, clothes stores, gyms), many people have gotten tired of being quarantined and decided to protest. Two weeks ago, a group of people began protesting and demanding for the beaches to be open in California. People have become ignorant; instead of taming this virus by staying at home they want to go to the beach. Besides the protests, there has been an increase of hate crime against the Asian community. There have been cases where people randomly attack Asians in the streets -even though they're not from China- and blame them for bringing the virus to this country. I personally believe this has been the worst that I have witnessed in the 21 years of my life.

This reminds of what I've learned in this class about the colonization of the Americas. During the colonization of the Americas, Europeans were easily able to get rid of indigenous people through the various diseases that colonizers carried with them. Natives were not immune to any sort of sickness, therefore when the Spanish colonizers arrived the natives were impacted heavily. The indigenous community encountered a decrease of population since they caught an epidemic consisting of diseases such as the smallpox, measles, etc. Most of the indigenous population had been wiped out and as time passed by, the number of population became smaller. Although history books say that they were completely wiped out, Professor Ruiz mentioned that some Native Americans survived the epidemic but were unheard of. In some aspects, this current pandemic relates to epidemics that natives have to go through because there was a huge number

of death toll in both instances. The only difference is that natives had to see their loved ones go through a painful death, whereas today families have to say their goodbyes to their loved ones through a walkie talkie. Also, the colonizers were not bothered that natives were dying due to their diseases that they brought and it was seen as a benefit to them. Although this has not been mentioned in class, I also want to note that a century ago the exact same circumstance occurred. In 1918, there was a spread of an influenza pandemic which began in Spain. The exact same notions that occurred in 1918 is happening to us right now. Everything was closed: schools, theaters, churches, and hospitals were being overwhelmed as well. The influenza virus continued until 1919, when it began to subside. Although this year has caught the world by surprise, I believe we have learned from the past pandemic -the Spanish Flu- since the government has been doing a great job in keeping matters together and not causing a wide panic throughout the country. The covid-19 did make its impact economically, politically, and socially, however this will mark its signature in history.

