**COVID-19**

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ENGL 1100 Foundations of College Writing

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Fall 2021

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Like any average child who was enrolled in America’s public-school systems, I can recall bits and pieces of our history lessons pertaining to pandemics. A couple being the infamous “Black Death” and the Smallpox Pandemic. Even now, I can vividly picture the long, black, beak- like masks that popped out at me like a scene from a horror movie, whenever my teacher instructed us to open our textbooks. My heart always went out to those who suffered during those times, but other than that, I never gave it much more thought. A global pandemic just simply didn’t seem possible to me. I thought “things like this could never happen now, we are way too advanced.” I didn’t understand the magnitude of a pandemic, nor could I fully sympathize for the victims, until 2020, when Coronavirus took the world by storm.

As a junior in high school my world went from attending sporting events, going out with friends, and giddily anticipating senior year, to mandatory quarantines, mask mandates, and daily news segments of increasing numbers in COVID- 19 related deaths. Remote learning wasn’t a struggle for me academically, however, being restricted from socializing with those whom I had grown so close to over the years, took a toll on my mental health. I felt isolated, and afraid that someone I loved would be the next headline on the nine o’clock news. I couldn’t grasp how two weeks off of school could turn into remote learning for the remainder of the year, and eventually into a senior year, that at that point wasn’t even worth getting excited about. I did everything that I saw possible to make the best of things given the circumstances, but this wasn’t something we were prepared or trained for.

Today, as a college student, I still fight the urge to pull down my itchy mask and cut a few feet off the six-foot social distancing rule, but I know it is necessary in the grand scheme of things. We have to deal with these inconveniences now, in order to return to those “good old days,” when we could love and live a bit more freely. Although these past few years have been exhausting, I can say that I have grown leaps and bounds through this pandemic. The situation that our world is battling has taught me to better adapt to situations that are out of my control and comfort zone, and to be cautious, but never lose sight of the little things in life that really matter.

With a population of over seven billion people in the world, each one of us has been affected by the COVID- 19 pandemic, whether we’ve personally contracted the virus or not. The mental and physical changes that we have endured within the last few years, have been enormous. I never imagined that I would live to see such a historical period in time. Our society will forever be changed by this pandemic, and COVID-19 will continue to make history. Someday, teachers will ask their students to open their textbooks, and it will be our story that is scrawled out over their pages.