

The Coronavirus Pandemic: Through the Lens of a Photographer

Spring 2020 Semester Extra Credit
WRIT 201
1st of May, 2020

Preface

As I sit down to write this, I am sitting alone in total isolation, confined to the walls of my house and the boundaries of my home city of Denver, Colorado. It is certainly easy to become anxious, depressed, and even scared of the situation at hand. A pandemic of this scale is literally a once in a lifetime event (*if that*), and something most of us have not seen before, and hopefully will never see again. Personally, as a seemingly healthy young adult with no comorbidities, my daily anxiety over dying from the illness is low (*knock on wood*). However, my fear of infecting others, especially my aging parents, courses through my blood every day. As a society, I think our issues are much larger than the virus itself. I think the public has a hard time completely trusting the media- it's 2020, after all. Every article you read, or story you watch, provides you with enough fear or mixed messages to keep you mildly entertained (*and majorly confused*) for the next calendar year alone. The ultimate uniqueness that I personally get from this incredibly odd time comes due to the fact that I am a pre-med microbiology major. As if the irony doesn't stop there, I had a college exam on the details of coronavirus a few days before the major transition to online school began. From my perspective, although I am far from a doctor myself, I certainly believe I have the knowledge on the topic to delineate accurate vs. inaccurate sources, and perhaps most importantly form my own opinion on the issues at hand. Furthermore, I believe that my ability to analyze data and biases on my own helps me greatly in minimizing anxieties and increasing preparedness. I will say, though, it's still odd to even scribe the word quarantine; in fact, a few weeks ago I probably had no idea how to even spell it. Now, we are living under one- a reality each and every one of us must face.

Even though I may understand the basic scientific principles behind coronavirus infections, I am not immune to the massive, disruptive, and downright historical societal impacts this pandemic has caused. By and large, the one thing I have learned from this situation is to never take life for granted. More specifically, do not take the simple things in life for granted. In the time of social-distancing and quarantine, we have been forced to reap what we've sown as a digital society. We are a society driven by social media, texting, and smartphones- and now it is all we have left. Never again will I take for granted the simple act of enjoying another person's company... *in person*. You commonly hear to live every day like it's your last, but you are convinced that it will never happen to you. Well, now it has happened... and it's happening to all of us. Even though the present is hard, very hard, I believe this will lead to one of the most prosperous times in modern history. Even the simple act of driving to the grocery store to buy a gallon of milk does not come without immense thought and fear of reprimand.

The most terrifying aspect of the pandemic, in my opinion, is the societal fallout such as the mental health consequences I fear will precipitate the longer the lockdown continues. If you weren't anxious or depressed before the pandemic, you certainly might be now. And of course, if you're like the millions of Americans who suffered from depression and anxiety before the new coronavirus struck, I cannot imagine how you feel now. Personally, the disruption to my daily routine has been severe, as with most people my age. Of course, I am blessed. I'm blessed for my health. I'm blessed for my home. I'm blessed that my family still has their jobs. I'm blessed every morning to wake up and see the sun shining brightly through my window, as it means the world is still spinning. We will get through this, I know it, but that does not mean it will be easy and it

does not mean that it has been easy. I worry about the lasting effects as a result of the nation's economic shutdown. Additionally, I worry about the mental health of the American people and of people across the entire world. People are not meant to be isolated, especially not alone and in fear. Sure, a lot of us are introverts, but there are very few true hermits in society. Although the reasons for the shutdown likely outweigh the negative implications, the effects on the economy and mental health of the general public are just foolish to overlook. At the moment, the disruption to our daily lives is planned to end on April 30th, 2020 in most jurisdictions. At the moment there are nearly one million cases of COVID-19 in the United States, yet nearly all 300 million of the country's occupants are vividly feeling its effects. This community effort to prevent new cases and save lives is well worth the uncertainty and inconvenience experienced by the masses, but for how long? Political and social unrest can only continue peacefully for so long before the damage done to the fabric of the nation is permanent. I liken the nation shut down through this quarantine to a heart attack. The longer the nation is isolated, the longer the nation is out of work, and the longer human beings are forced to be separated, the more severe the lasting damage will be. As with any heart attack or stroke, time is of the essence. The return of blood must be brought back to the precious tissues of the heart or the brain, or in this case, the precious fabric of society before it is too late. How much longer must the children of this nation be stuck at home without true education? How much longer must small business owners be left in shambles, with the world crumbling beneath their feet? I believe there must be another way, there simply has to be. I believe politicians must find a way out for their people and their constituents. People must be able to return to work safely but return to work nonetheless. "The safety and well-being of the American people is of utmost importance", is a quote we have heard the President and almost every Governor say numerous times throughout the past months, yet how many fellow Americans do you know who are currently in a state of well-being? As a microbiology major, I am in no way contesting the importance of social-distancing, but I'm a human too, and I believe as humans we must find a way to compromise.

I have never witnessed an event so broad and so powerful to the point that it affected every aspect of daily life. This unique time of existence will test us as a nation and a world, and I truly believe we will emerge stronger than ever before. Now that we have proven to ourselves and our counterparts across the globe that we *can* come together, I hope that we *will* come together in the future to combat other worldwide issues such as climate change- because after all, this proves that we really are all in this together. Finally, since one of my biggest hobbies outside of school is photography, I decided to photo journal my experience living through the pandemic. ***The photos seen on the following pages are mine.***

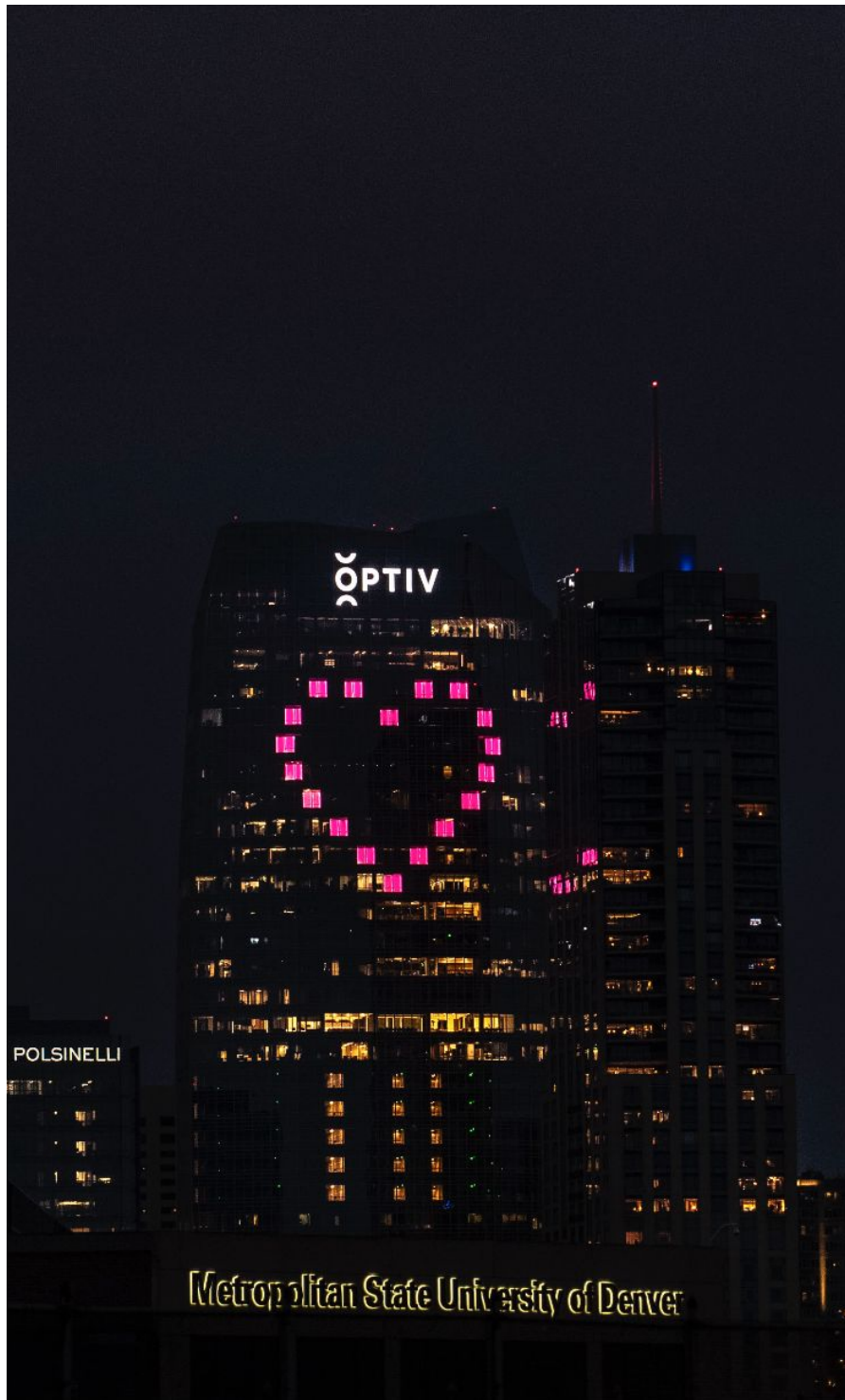
“A Red Light on Life”
Outside of Denver, CO- April 15th, 2020



The world as we know it at the moment feels very similar to this shot, and I just couldn't resist shooting it. All too often through this month and a half of quarantine and isolation from friends, relationships, work, and even interactions at school, I have felt more and more like the stick-figure shown in this shot above.

“All in this Together”

Downtown Denver, CO- April 15th, 2020



The newest skyscraper of the Denver skyline illuminated with a heart of solidarity for families, businesses, and healthcare professionals struggling to cope with the gravity of the COVID-19 crisis.

“Stay at home, save a life”
Near Denver, CO - April 17th, 2020



An eerie government broadcasted message to Colorado travelers. Luckily, I always have my camera with me and managed to snap this shot on a run for errands. It seems as if dusk has been more depressing around here lately...

“Abandoned”

Lone Tree, CO- April 22nd, 2020



An apocalyptic scene as a usually very popular mall is nothing more than abandoned in South Metro Denver as coronavirus cripples the state of Colorado & the nation.

“An all-too-common Sight”
Lone Tree, CO- April 22nd, 2020



Restaurants across the nation forced to close their doors and dining rooms to customers amid the growing threat of the coronavirus outbreak. Many remain open for pickup, delivery, while some have even resorted to selling ingredients as consumer groceries. I have never quite seen this wide-spread of an event, and I worry how many establishments will not be lucky enough to recover from the crisis financially.

“A New Way of Life”
Lone Tree, CO- April 22nd, 2020



A sign reminding the public to maintain distance and eliminate group gatherings over 10 to curb the spread of the coronavirus in the area.

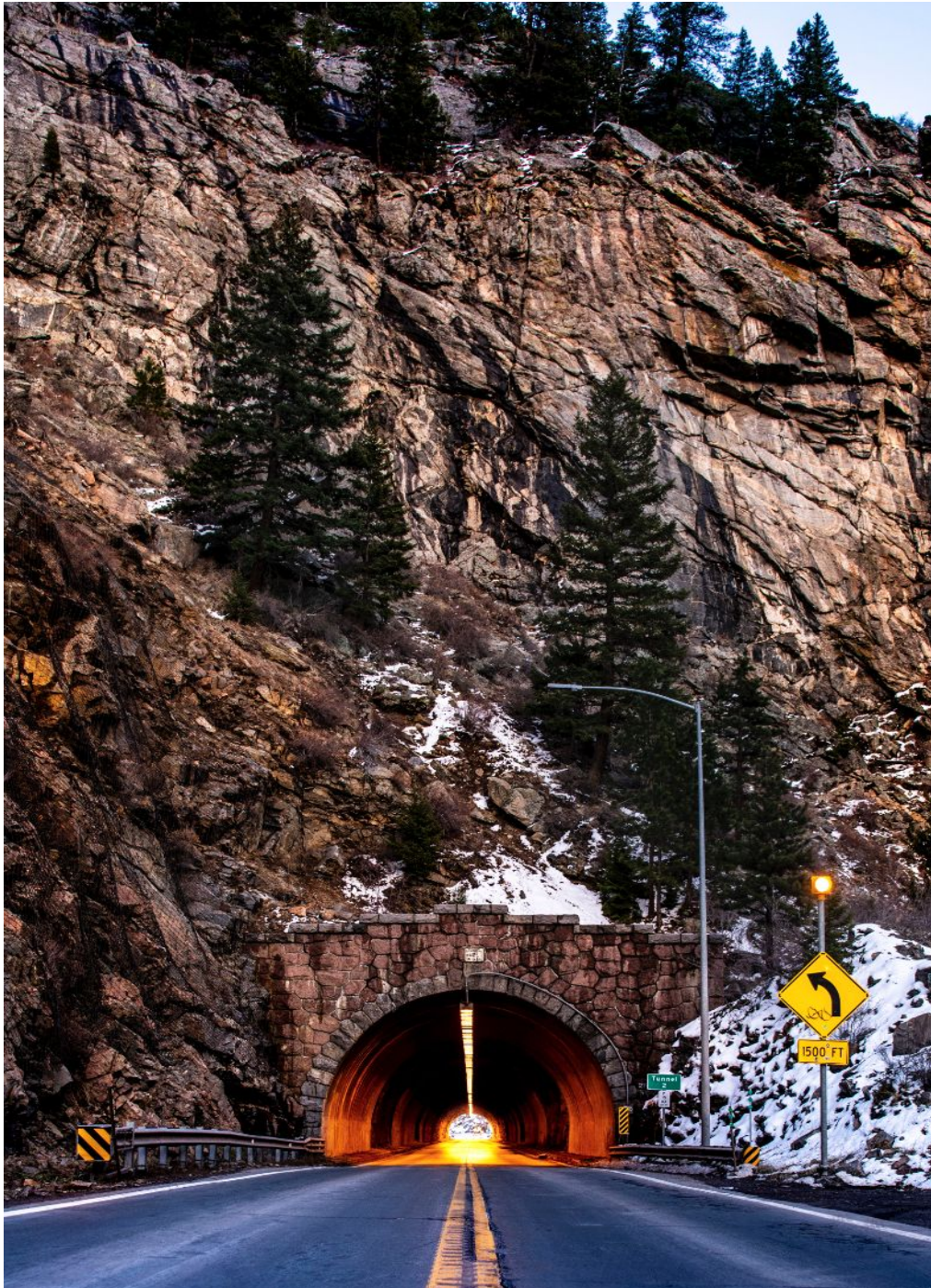
“Reaching New Lows”
Parker, CO- April 22nd, 2020



Some of the lowest gas prices in modern-day history blanket the nation amid the pandemic. I for one have never seen \$1.00 per gallon prices and I personally do not think I will ever see prices that low again. It is surreal knowing that we are living through history.

“The Light at the End of the Tunnel”

Near Denver, CO- April 17th, 2020



Although these tragic times are hard for everyone, we must persevere knowing that they will pass and things will get better with time. I snapped this picture both metaphorically and because I just loved the composition.

For now, let's keep our heads up. The end.