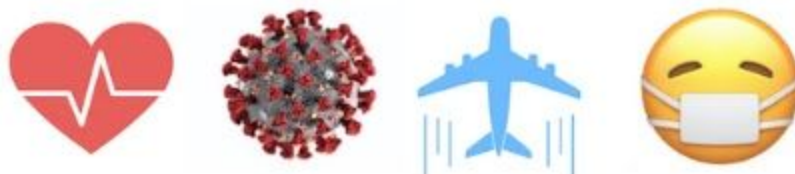

Romero Journal

Covid-19 Edition



The Romero Journal seeks to amplify the voices of the marginalized in our communities and promote social justice. Inspired by Saint Oscar Romero, a martyr and exemplary justice-seeking catholic, the The Romero Journal strives to deliver the stories that inspire solidarity, compassion, and action. As a branch of Political Advocates of the Sacred Heart, The Romero Journal also serves to inform the SHP student body about opportunities of activism and advocacy.

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The Crisis of Covid-19 within the Crisis of Homelessness



Kate Newton '22

The coronavirus pandemic is something that everyone is going through together all over the world. We truly are all in this together, and most of us are able to follow government issued guidelines. For example, we are all hopefully sheltering in place at our homes, yet not all individuals in our area have that option. Those suffering from homelessness do not have the ability to stay home, and unfortunately, this creates a problem within the pre-existing crisis of homelessness. California has about 150,00 homeless people, many of whom are older and in poorer health, meaning the virus could easily threaten the lives of thousands of our neighbors.

In an effort to help California's unsheltered citizens, Governor Gavin Newsom has directed \$150 million to aid shelters, and any hotels or motels to safely take in as many people as possible. Multiple hotel rooms are being bought out in San Francisco to offer shelter in place to people with nowhere to go. However, when the pandemic subsides, they will just end up on the streets again. The fact that hotels and motels are opening their doors as shelters is great, but it is not helping the broken system in the long run. We shouldn't have people on the streets with nowhere to go, but it is a big problem, and the solution will be complex. The actions being made currently could possibly become a template for a solution after the pandemic moves on. Interestingly enough, something about a world-wide virus that has the ability to kill, brings to light that not everyone has a safe place to stay home during a situation like this.

Luckily, the coronavirus disease is actually presenting this opportunity of showing the world how bad things have gotten for those with no home or shelter to turn to, in this dire time of need. Hopefully, this catches attention and kicks off momentum for how important it is that everyone is able to have a safe home. Fresno Mayor Lee Brand's director of strategic initiatives talks of how "we are seeing waves of public and private resources come together to speed up the street-to-home transition, and it's demonstrating that moving people off the streets can happen quickly when we have collective effort." When we all work together to make something right, it goes by quickly and efficiently and truly benefits those in need. But it should not have taken a pandemic to quicken the solution of this pre-existing crisis.

Even if the homeless are being prioritized now, unfortunately, the pandemic could result in wiping away the progress of lowering income inequality. It could all cause more damage to the situation, making it harder to grasp onto opportunities to end homelessness. Lastly, all the shelters out there working very hard to supply the unsheltered with a safe place to shelter in place should be recognized for their hard work. Many of the shelters in our communities are in fact nonprofits and will only take in grants and donations, making the government's attempt at offering bank loans to small businesses during this time useless to nonprofits.

Overall, it is up to the community to step in and fight for our fellow neighbors. This is a big deal that I hope compels each and every one of us to recognize that the system is broken and that we need to fix it. This pandemic might display a bright side, but it might not last. With a collective effort, we can hopefully cure the crisis of homelessness within our community.

COVID-19 and its Effect on Undocumented Immigrants



Dorreen Darya-Bari '21

The Coronavirus is a worldwide crisis that has affected the entire global population, both directly and indirectly. In the United States, the virus has especially amplified the daily struggles of undocumented immigrants.

As many undocumented immigrants refuse to interact with public healthcare systems due to their fear of getting caught by immigration authorities, they put their lives, as well as the lives of others, at serious risk. In addition, many COVID-19 testing centers require patients to show state identification and a medical referral – both of which are challenging for undocumented immigrants to do. Also, worries about out-of-pocket costs will hinder testing and care, especially as jobs evaporate. Thus, they not only face extra challenges getting tested but also fear that they will not be able to afford proper hospital care. As a result, many people hold off on getting screened which puts the lives of others in danger.

Miguel Angel Sanchez (an undocumented individual) was interviewed by *USA Today* and said that he has been sick for two weeks with a fever, headaches, body pain, and respiration problems. He recently visited two hospitals and was denied proper COVID-19 testing. Sanchez, as well as 7.1 million undocumented immigrants, lack health insurance which restricts them from getting critical medical testing. Also, many undocumented immigrants do not have primary care providers and have had to rely on emergency departments (EDs) for years. Others will resort to inaccurate online information or will wait too long to seek care.

A few weeks ago, Congress passed a \$2 trillion Coronavirus relief bill, which claims to send payments of up to twelve hundred dollars to unemployed workers and Americans hit hardest by the virus. However, undocumented immigrant families are excluded from this bill due to their lack of federal work authorization, or work permits.

As businesses begin to feel the financial pressures of the pandemic, they are starting to lay off employees (many of which are undocumented). Even though undocumented workers collectively pay billions of dollars in taxes, they are excluded from unemployment insurance benefits. As a result, hopeless individuals turn to nonprofit organizations and continue to wait for federal help. Overall, responding to the epidemic will require a unifying approach. It will be difficult to reverse years of anti-immigrant policies, but we believe it's essential that the U.S. government address the needs of undocumented immigrants in its response. For example, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) passed last month, provides coverage for COVID-19 testing for uninsured peoples. However, we believe that the FFCRA should extend its care to all patients with symptoms of COVID-19 regardless of their insurance or immigration status. Also, if undocumented immigrants push away from the healthcare system during the pandemic, it will only make the road to recovery longer. Unless the government encourages undocumented people to receive the proper medical care that they need, without fears of deportation or family separation, the danger of infection could increase for everyone.

College Response to COVID-19



Samantha Campos '21

The transition for many high school students to online school has been arduous, but our situation has been nowhere near as difficult as those of college students. Nearly 300 universities all across the U.S. have closed and have switched to remote learning via online programs such as Zoom and Canvas. Many students are out of state or international which means that traveling home isn't always the easiest option. However, this does not matter to most college and university campuses. Most schools gave their students a week to move out while expecting them to continue their online work. For many students, this put them in a difficult position. Many of them had to donate or sell their clothes, furniture, and other items they had that would not fit in their luggage or suitcase on their way back home. International students were also forced to pack up everything and catch the next flight out before the borders would close and keep them from going back home. Many of these students shared their experience online; one international took to TikTok to show that she had to pack everything in her dorm in four hours, in order to catch a flight later that evening before the U.S. would stop any travel to and from Europe. A Harvard student tweeted "The last 48 hours have been wild...this morning it was announced that...all students need to leave campus. Crazy times."

Although some students are able to arrange plans on such short notice, some students, like those who are low income, first-generation, or on financial aid, don't have the resources to move out and travel back home that easily. Many students heavily rely on dining halls, room and board, employment opportunities, and mental and physical health services. So although these schools were right in taking the precautions to close their campuses, they were not cautious of the fact that some of their students are more susceptible to the coronavirus if they leave campus.

Nonetheless, some schools are beginning to aid their students and find solutions to these problems. Michigan State University, the University of Maine, the University of Chicago, and George Washington University are among some of the schools that, despite transferring to online classes, have left their facilities open, which includes the room and board, as well as the dining halls. In 2018 alone, Harvard University received \$1.4 billion in donations, while Michigan State University received \$272.6 million. This is why it is hard to understand why a school that gains 5 times the amount of donations of a school that is able to keep their facilities open to vulnerable students, is not able to provide any means of housing or accessible food for its students. Most of the students who are in the most need of these services are having to rely on alumni who are able to help them cover any costs of any necessities that they may need.

How You Can Support At-Risk Groups During A Pandemic



Sofie Wheeler '21

The recent Covid-19 outbreak has left small businesses, elders, and single and/or working parents in the dust with little to no support. Due to safety precautions such as social distancing and shelter in place, people are not leaving their houses unless it is for essential errands, like grocery runs. Businesses that thrive on consumers leaving their homes are suffering as an effect of the pandemic. All nonessential businesses have been ordered to close. This includes, but is not limited to, restaurants, boutiques, hair salons, nail salons, bakeries, and coffee shops. Additionally, elders are the most at-risk when it comes to leaving their homes, because of the threat that the pandemic poses to them. We must do everything we can to support and protect them. With that, single and working parents are also very much at-risk. Their kids would usually be at school while they are at work, but since schools are closed their kids are home. This means that they have to find childcare, which is hard to find and can be expensive. Also, while at schools their kids are usually getting at least one meal a day during the week. This means they also have to spend more money on food for their kids. During this hard time, you might be wondering how you can help these small business owners, elders, and single or working parents stay afloat.

Here are some of the ways that you can help these at-risk groups:

- Prepay your hair appointments to help business owners continue to pay rent.
- Pay your nail technician or eyebrow specialist as if you were still going in as often.
- Tip delivery workers extra (they are risking a lot to help you stay safe).
- Run errands for those most vulnerable in your community (for example, elders).
- Offer to babysit children of working parents since their kids are at home and not at school.
- Offer to cook a meal for these same families since they usually get a meal from school.
- Order from your local restaurants that are still open for takeout or delivery.
- Donate to your favorite local businesses (local coffee shop, nail salon, bagel shop, etc.).
- Finally, stay home if you do not need to leave your house.

We must remember to support those who are the most vulnerable in our community. Local businesses, elders, and single and/or working parents are among those who need our support. These suggestions are just some of the ways that you can help support them during this time.

“This is what we’re about: We plant the seeds that will one day grow.” — Oscar Romero

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