



Fall 2021

COVID-19 Narratives from ANTH 210

Demi Ruiz

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My name is Gage Smith I am an adjunct faculty in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Whittier College. I am also a Poet, class of 2014. In teaching a methods class at Whittier College, I became aware that Poet Commons was accepting material created by students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The week before Halloween 2021, I created an extra-credit assignment in my cultural anthropology class where students could earn extra credit by writing a scary story in the time of pandemic and relate it to either the topic of religion or globalization, which we were covering the week the assignment was announced and due. They were informed of my intention to submit the assignment to Poet Commons and included a short biography about themselves for future Poets. I have organized the order of the narratives, but have not done any editing. This is what the students came up with...

Demi Ruiz

November 7, 2021

ANTH 210: Halloween Story

My name is Demi Ruiz and I am from Whittier. I am a third year student studying Child Development and my perspective year for graduation is 2023. One thing I would like future Poets to remember about me is that I truly enjoyed being a part of the Whittier College community. It is important to make connections and at Whittier I was able to do that!

October 13th, 2020 would become a day we never forget. Life as we know it would be changed forever. In Halloweentown, there was an evil scientist whom no one liked. Everyone ignored him and viewed him as an outcast. He was always in his laboratory making different things. No one thought anything of it or even bothered to find out what he was up to because we all thought he would never cause any harm to us. Little did we know, October 13th would come and our lives would be changed forever.

The evil scientist was creating a mixture that would affect everyone differently. For some people, they would not face severe consequences, whereas for others it was really bad. On this particular day, the weather was extremely weird. Everyone was already creeped out by this, especially with Halloween approaching. The laboratory that the scientist works in looked different than it did on other days. It was very gloomy and smoky around the building. When looking inside, you can see a bunch of green chemicals blowing up the room. I noticed that there was a group of people inside the lab drinking something from the scientist. After a few minutes, they came running out of the lab and were acting out in front of everyone. People did not know how to react or how to take care of them. These people ran off and no one saw them for a few days after that. People around town were starting to get sick. When they went to the doctors, they

did not know what was going on. Everyone blamed the incident on the scientist and the group of people. This incident was all over the news and the mayor of Halloweentown ordered for an investigation to take place. Everyone was looking for these people and the scientist to try to make sense of what was going on, but they were nowhere to be found. More and more people were getting sick and having different symptoms, but there was no treatment because doctors could not figure out what it was. Detectives from the investigation found remains of the fluid that the people in the lab were drinking and ran some tests. The results came in and they identified it as a new virus strain that was created. It was now known as the “raging rona” and it was spreading not only in Halloweentown, but all over the world, and fast.

After the news leaked about this new virus, people had a lot of questions that were not being answered. They were just told to start staying home and some places were even implementing travel restrictions. If anyone were to go out, they needed to wear a mask. These masks were important to everyone because it seemed to be a form of protection in order to keep everyone safe. Masks in Halloweentown and everywhere else were now seen as very sacred items and they were valuable to all of us. With this huge change, everyone was extremely concerned about what would happen and everything else that was going on. This stressful incident created havoc because everyone was trying to prepare for what was to come. People started to stock up on their necessities, leaving the stores empty and destroyed. Halloweentown was starting to look like a ghost town. No one would come out of their houses and if they did, it was only for necessities. As soon as you came home from going out, there was a particular ritual that would take place. Everyone would sanitize their hands before going into their home and go straight to the bathroom in order to shower. This happened every time someone went out because we believed it would keep us safe from the raging rona.

No one knew how long it would take to find a cure. As of right now, the two things that were helping to protect us were masking up and constantly washing and sanitizing our hands. It went from a few weeks to a few months. These things eventually became profane and were a part of our “new normal”. Everyone was still cautious and trying to stay as safe as possible. There were still travel restrictions and shutting down of stores had a huge impact on globalization and the economy. It also changed the ways in which we communicated with one another. Since we were no longer able to see each other in-person, everyone used technology, like FaceTime or other social media apps to keep in contact. Everyone was extremely grateful for this form of connection and communicating because even though we were physically separated, it allowed us to feel close together. This virus has changed our lives and the world we live in for good. Everyone just started to get used to this way of living and was looking forward to the day they would find a cure and live normal lives again.

Taylor De La Rosa

Professor Smith

ANTH 210

November 7, 2021

A Scary Story In The Time of Pandemic: Religion vs a pandemic

To introduce myself, my name is Taylor De La Rosa, I was born and raised in Southern California, more specifically La Habra, California. I am currently a junior at Whittier College, a biology major, and I am in the graduating class of 2023.

New year new me, the famous quote you hear around the new year, but sadly for everyone there would be a new you. Towards the end of 2019 there was an outbreak of a virus that was spreading in China. In early 2020 the virus was spread to other countries and it continued to spread across the world. This virus is known as the Coronavirus or Covid-19 and it was not an average contagious virus because it was much more lethal. This pandemic is still currently taking its toll across the world as of October 2021, however with the assistance of vaccines the cases have severely dropped. This pandemic was no fun vacation from work or school, many people lost their jobs and loved ones due to the coronavirus. The pandemic affected every single person's life in many different ways whether it was mentally, physically, or financially.

Another important aspect that was heavily affected by the pandemic was religion. Religion can be a very important part of people's lives no matter which religion they follow each one was affected in some way. Each religion has its own specific structure, but every religion shares four common elements which are cosmology, supernatural, rules governing behavior, and

rituals (Brown 2018). Our religions can be similar and very different from one another, however religion in general can be a part of people's everyday lives. At one point during the pandemic most places that attracted large crowds were shut down. Places such as amusement parks, work places, schools, churches, restaurants, malls, concerts, sporting events, the olympics, and even forced many retail stores to shut down. This significantly impacted many people's daily lives as people had to change their everyday way of living. Along with religion being affected in person, religious ceremonies had to be shut down. This affected people very roughly because times like these and while the pandemic was at its worst was when people wanted to go to their places of worship. During this time many people were trying to figure out how to work around the pandemic and the quarantine we were placed under. Just like every other problem that arises with the shut down there were ways around it to make things work. Places of worship did live streaming services so that people can still feel like they are attending while also staying safe at home. As the Covid cases went down many places of worship were allowing people to come in person however only with a max capacity, social distancing, and mask wearing. Religion is very important to people and without being able to participate the same way that you were had people at a crossroad. Many people continued to attend live streaming events from home or attended drive by options, while others did not focus on their religious duties as it was impossible to be as involved as we had to be quarantined. Even while still following your religion during this time it was obviously not the same as before and people were often feeling disconnected from their religion. Personally, my connection with my religion was also impacted like many other peoples in these ways. By not being able to be in person practicing my religion I also felt that disconnect and was losing my relationship with my religion over the time of the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, once I noticed that I was ignoring and forgetting about my religion is when I started to

take slow steps to reconnect my life and put back pieces like religion that were put off by the pandemic. The disconnect was a big topic during the pandemic because people could not be at school, work places, and go anywhere to be social with others. People felt disconnected with themselves and the world as we were all thrown into a strange alternate reality that we would have never seen coming. However, as humans we are always adapting to new things and this was another obstacle that we had to figure out and work with what we were given no matter how bad it was getting people still had to work and fulfil their daily necessities. There were many difficult obstacles people had to face during this time and religion was one of the big things people had to figure out how to work around, but people figured out how to get around it and look for the positives in this difficult time.

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Hypatia Pine is currently a junior at Whittier College, located in Whittier, California with an intended double-major in Global Cultural Studies and Environmental Studies and a minor in Chinese. She is originally from the island of Oahu, born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Throughout her time at Whittier, she has enjoyed the opportunities the institution has given her and looks forward for what is to come for her remaining years at Whittier College and beyond.

“A Scary Story in the Time of the Pandemic;” Serial Murders and Ritualistic Killings During Unprecedented Times

The 2020 global pandemic has brought many long-lasting effects and changes to people's lifestyles. Because many have stayed home experiencing signs of boredom, social isolation, and overall disconnect from society, this has prompted lower crime rates in the streets. However, while general crime rates have taken a toll, the odd and frightening fact is that murder rates have increased in the United States, and by 30% for that matter (King 2021). FBI data has shown that these murders have been occurring both nation- and worldwide; not just in big, populated cities, but within smaller towns as well (King 2021). Amid a global pandemic, and specifically during Halloween, the most sinister time of the year, it almost seems that more people are expressing defeat in other ways.

When you look at the Hollywood industry come Halloween-time, these businesses take this holiday with grave seriousness. Countless movies, crime shows, and even children's movies centered around the holiday-- meant to spark a sense of excitement and fear in those who take part in watching them. Yet while meant for fun, games, and celebration, in other situations can be taken either a little too seriously or be based on true stories. There's no doubt that certain films like *Halloween*, introducing characters like Michael Myers, or *A Nightmare on Elm Street*

with Freddy Krueger have inspired certain people in all the wrong ways. In 2013, a teenage male, Jake Evans, explained to authorities that his inspiration for murdering his mother and sister came after watching Rob Zombie's 2007 film series, *Halloween* (Walsh 2013). Most amateur murders, like Evans, may also have psychological defects prompting them to act defiantly. However, with more experienced serial killers, there becomes a ritual and, almost religious, aspect to the murders they perform.

Every serial killer has a mode of operation (also known as MO's). According to Megan McRae, these modes of operations include specific techniques, habits, or features of their behavior (McRae 2020). For them, these MO's transform into a type of ritual and becomes a part of the killer's experience. These rituals may serve as "emotional satisfaction (McRae 2020)" to enhance the experience. In certain situations, the rituals may also be connected to the individual(s) beliefs—whether religiously affiliated or intertwined with the supernatural. Sashur Henninger-Rener explains how while conducting these murders, rituals not only establish a sense of community but also play a role in determining specific "guidelines of behavior (Henninger-Rener 2020, 288)," which make up the killer's experience.

Further, in some religions, the killings themselves are a part of specific rituals that are tied to a broader aspect of their lifestyle or culture. While rare, ritual killings in certain religions still exist and occur to link to a higher power of belief. These ritual killings can include but are not limited to serial murders, mutilation of live or corpse bodies, as well as the sacrificial or doctrinal positioning of these bodies. (World of Forensic Science 2021). All within the 21st Century, there have been multiple cases involving satanic rituals and vampirism where murders have occurred for a greater, more holy, purpose.

In Buddhism, specifically during the post-Ashokan period, certain rituals and practices were fully centered around horrific images of the body. These views of the body were particularly projected onto women in those societies, where certain punishments involved ritualistic murder to maintain the “purity” of others (Wilson 1995), specifically men’s bodies. Rituals also surrounded that of mutilation and the positioning of women’s corpses as a way for others to meditate on the bodies to promote and maintain celibacy for monks in the monastic community (Wilson 1995). These practices as evidence, date back hundreds of centuries and are a testament to how long ritual killings have prevailed.

With the pandemic still looming worldwide, the United States has not been the only country experiencing a rise in murder rates. Other counties across the globe have been undergoing the same problem. A year and a half into the pandemic on October 23, 2021, a Jamaican Pastor, Kevin O. Smith, and other subordinates of his were arrested as suspects of murder through the act of “alleged human sacrifices (Froelich 2021).” According to sources, two people were killed during a Roman Catholic sacrifice (Froelich 2021). The sacrifice surrounded notions of impurities of certain followers and involved the acts of not only murder, but also mutilation, humiliation through the stripping of clothes, and suspected sexual abuse (Froelich 2021).

This is just one instance of a ritual killing during the time of the global pandemic, and many other homicides have occurred outside of religious practices as well. Whether during Halloween-time or not, these worldwide increasing murder rates are sure to be scary, and not something that is to be taken lightly. While fictional characters like Michael Meyers or Freddy Krueger spark a sense of fearful excitement during the holidays, these characters, as well as the

Corona Virus, are not the only things we need to be worried about during this challenging and frightening time.

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About the Author: My name is Liz Witt and I am from Carlsbad, CA. I am creating my own major through WSP titled “Child Health and Development” and I am planning to graduate in the year of 2023. I missed out on the last few months of my freshman year and preformed school online my whole sophomore year. I am now a junior who is currently attending school on Whittier College campus again.

My life during the COVID 19 pandemic

Written November, 5, 2021

For many people living on planet earth during the year of 2019 until 2021, have experienced and are still fighting the Coronavirus. Living with COVID 19 everyday makes us humans feel like we are stuck in an alternative reality. Though a great number of the world population is vaccinated, us humans are still living each day in fear, wondering when this virus will terminate. The coronavirus covid-19 pandemic is the most notable global health catastrophe of our time and demonstrates the greatest challenge we have faced since the Second World War.

My time during the pandemic was a time like no other. One day I was living in the dorms on my college campus and within a week my mom came and picked me up to bring me home. It was the time around spring break so we had a small break from school. After spring break ended my teammates and I were waiting so see if we were allowed to return to campus. Shortly after spring break, I got the message that Whittier College closed their campus due to the COVID 19 virus. The rest of my freshman year of college was online. I never thought that I would live in the time of a pandemic. I didn't even know what the word pandemic meant before I encountered this virus. Little did I know how much life I would miss out on due to this pandemic. I lost two seasons of lacrosse, lost my grandpa, lost time that I could have spent traveling, and lost time to spend precious moments with friends and family while making the best memories of our lives. I look back at when I was living my life in lockdown and look at where I am now. Quarantine was

an unfortunate time and I did not get much out of it. I was mostly lazy for the majority and if anything my room decor improved because that is where I was spending all of my time.

Holidays during the pandemic looked very different. My first Thanksgiving during this time was one I thought I would never experience. It was just my parents and I. My brother and sister were stuck up at school with the virus so they could not come home. My aunts, uncles, and grandparents, and close family friends were also not capable of spending thanksgiving at our house because they could not put their health at risk. Everyone was staying isolated. The time I spent with my parents during COVID 19 increased my bond with them. I now have new positive memories with them and I am trying not to focus too much on the negative memories from the pandemic. This year for Thanksgiving we are having our aunts and uncles from Colorado staying at our house, my grandma, both of my siblings, and close family friends. I am beyond excited to make up for this lost time with my family and friends. Thanksgiving is an important holiday for my family and I hope I will never have to spend it without some of the most important people in my life.

All of that being said, the pandemic has inspired me to write a scary story. One of the things I do not practically understand and I am sure others do not understand as well is how this virus started and how it spread so fast. How does a virus spread from one country to another that is more than 1000 miles away in just a few months? This virus is mysterious and confusing, so here is my creative explanation on how it all started.

A Scary Story In The Time of Pandemic

Halloween has the spooky, ghostly atmosphere we know and love today. One of our halloween rituals was as a family we would sit around our living room and light candles. During this we would interact with the afterlife. Since October is the scariest month of the year, this

monthly ritual was very important to my family and our spiritual practices. Some people may see this as evil magic. To us, they were just spooky spiritual beliefs that were unfamiliar to others. Before COVID 19 I would live my life so freely. I would not care about the things I touched, the people I hugged, whether I would have enough toilet paper, and I would not even think twice about my elders socializing and the health was potentially at risk. One day my life changed, everyone's life changed. I went downstairs to see my parents and siblings. They were nowhere to be found. At this time it was October, very close to Halloween so I thought my family was messing with me and going to pop out at any moment. I went to look in the pantry to see if they were hiding in there. I opened the big white door and saw something more behind the cereal box. In my house we do not have any pets so I was caught off guard and concerned. As I began to yell for the rest of my family I saw a black tail reveal itself. Then came the four legs and lastly the face. I could not tell what this creature was and I was extremely horrified so I slowly started backing away from the pantry and closing the door. All of a sudden this dark cat showed itself and began to hiss at me. I was screaming for my family members and shut the pantry door but this animal slipped through the crack and followed me up the stairs. I felt scratching at my foot. Next thing you know I have been bit by this cat. My ankle began to swell and I instantly felt sick to my stomach and began experiencing chills, aches, nausea, and shortness of breath. I was panicking because I was so ill and had no idea where my family could be. Were they in danger? What kind of sick cat is this and where did it come from? Why am I experiencing symptoms of COVID 19 right after I have been bit by this scary cat!? I ran outside my house and found my family in my front yard. They were panicking as they had been bit too. They yelled "Hurry! Shut the door as fast as you can, do not let that horrifying animal get us again!" I noticed my family was having the same symptoms that I was and we had all been bit by this cat. My parents called

911 and pet control. We put on our masks and went into the ambulance. All the paramedics were in protective suits. As my family and I were being taken to the hospital by the ambulance, I saw pet control come out of my house with a cage where I saw a black, furry figure. That's when I knew my house was safe, but my family on the other hand was not. We were infected and little did we know that this black, spooky, halloween looking cat would be the start of the COVID 19 pandemic that would ruin humanity's normal life. And that is how the virus started. Our family went to the hospital and there were hundreds of other families that had also been bitten by this strange creature. The hospital was chaotic and everyone was so ill. As weeks and months passed the news announced that this cat creature was terminated by the government. The animal got to humanity before anyone could stop it, and that is how one spooky halloween cat caused the COVID 19 pandemic.

Celebrating Life As We Know It

In the year 2020, around Halloween time, the United States and most of the world were living in an ongoing pandemic that did not seem to have a near ending. There were many Coronavirus cases that were increasing, despite a newly made vaccination. Not every person was able to receive the vaccination first, so most people turned to faith. My family and I created an altar showcasing the Virgin Mary, Jesus, and family members that had passed. We would pray at the altar whenever we felt alone, or when we wanted reassurance about whether we were going to see an end to the pandemic. I would pray for the well-being and good health of my family and friends. Not only was Covid scary to talk about, I feared leaving my household and catching the virus. However, there were other things that we should have been worried about; like the shortage of toilet paper at Costco, or the high demand for masks and hand sanitizer. On the night of Halloween, my family gathered together to celebrate the best we could. We talked about different experiences, specifically ghost stories, and the stories of our loved ones who impacted our lives.

I took some time to appreciate my family's altar. In my religion, we call it an 'ofrenda', which means an offering of pictures, food, and memories of those who had passed. My mother decorated it with orange carnations, sugar skulls, pictures of family and friends that passed, and candles. She does this every Halloween, and specifies that it is for The Day of the Dead, which is practically equivalent to Halloween. Although the two holidays can be celebrated separately, my mother combines them to show that death should not be scary, but an awakening to what after life could be: a celebration. The sugar skulls that she leaves out are expressed in bright colors to represent the beauty of life, and to remember that our family remains full of life. Since I was a young girl, growing up in a strict Hispanic household, it was important to know your family's

heritage and celebrations. Even though we celebrated both holidays, they had to be known what they were each meant for. It was not about the candy, or costumes, but the life after death. I recall my mother explaining to me last Halloween, that she had witnessed one of her close friends who had passed, trying to communicate with her. Her picture has always been on our 'ofrenda' with her favorite scented candle lit beside it, but this time, as my mother was near, the candle's light vanished. It gave me shivers thinking about it, but it seemed that she was present with us, given that Halloween was her favorite time of the year.

As previously mentioned, my family and I talked about scary experiences. Well, it was my turn. Relating to the pandemic, I feared catching the virus. As much as I should not be, I feared death. Imagine meeting death because of the virus, but you are not ready to face it. Will your spirit wander around, looking for answers? Or will you accept the fact that you are gone, and begin celebrating your life? I have been fortunate enough that none of my family has caught the virus, but I am aware of how frightening it is. When the virus has entered your body, specific antigens have to recognize the foreign substance. However, if it is too much for your immune system, the virus will be in control. In the worst of cases, simply thinking about being admitted to a hospital was striking. This same year, there was a shortage of ventilators for patients, meaning that not every patient who had an extreme case of Covid, was able to receive one. Picture yourself being hopeless and alone in a hospital bed. That is what many of the patients experienced, including my mother's friend, who was not able to make it to her favorite time of year. It is scary to think about, but even worse when you actually experience it. For many, you turn to faith, and hope that God is on your side. With hope, my family and I always remember to live everyday as if it were our last. As terrifying as Covid may seem, death should not be seen

negatively, because after my life, my memory will put on my family's 'ofrenda'; and then they are able to celebrate me on The Day of the Dead and Halloween.

Although people say that Halloween is a time in which spirits and ghosts wander, it is simply more than that. It embarks that our passed family and friends visit us to commemorate their lives. Celebrating both holidays has taught me many things, but most importantly that you cannot run from death because it is already waiting for you at the finish line.

Author's Bio:

My name is Jocelyn Jimenez and I am from West Covina, California. I am a fourth year student, majoring in Biology, set to graduate in Spring 2022.