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Forgetting the Failures of the Past: An American Tradition

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Opinions

Forgetting the Failures of the Past: An American Tradition

March 2, 2021 by Jackie Au

🗨️ No Comments



Jackie Au



Campus Life Editor

We have seen this before.



Granted, the sheer scale and impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic poses as a unique global catastrophe, but the story and warnings are strikingly similar to those issued over 100 years ago. The 1918 pandemic saw the emergence of another highly infectious respiratory illness, the H1N1 influenza virus. The virus spread rapidly around the world, and over the course of a year claimed over 50 million lives, including over



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There are many

675,000 Americans.

In efforts to combat the spread of the virus, health officials around the globe urged for the implementation of lockdowns, quarantine orders, and mask mandates, albeit with varying degrees of success. However, of the lessons of the 1918 pandemic, the most pertinent remains in the failures that occurred – more specifically, the error in lifting restrictions too soon.

On Nov. 21, 1918, after nearly a month of a city mandated lockdown, officials of San Francisco lifted the lockdown and mask mandate. Celebrations ensued; thousands of residents gleefully stripped the masks from their faces and disposed of them on the city streets. It appeared to be a triumphant end to the grueling lockdown the residents of San Francisco had faced for over a month, and an apparent end to the horror of the rapidly spreading influenza. However, this decision would prove to be disastrous. The city, which had been praised for its apparent swift actions in combating the spread of the virus, had made a crucial error in easing the restrictions too soon, and, as a result, saw some of the worst case [numbers and deaths in the county](#).

In the face of a similar crisis, it would be a welcoming assumption to believe that we, as a nation, have learned from such past failures, and would instead go on to make choices to prevent such mistakes.

That assumption would be entirely *incorrect*.

reasons to recall Newsom, but we should also replace him with a progressive who will take action.

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Whittier College has received \$939,775 from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II issued by the United States Department of Education.

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On Feb. 25,
Physicians'

In fact, as the U.S. approaches over 515,000 COVID-19 deaths, various states across the country are opting to ease their COVID-19 restrictions. Earlier today, Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced that the Lone Star State would be lifting their [mask mandate](#), and that businesses are now set to return to 100 percent capacity. Almost immediately after this announcement, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves announced that [Mississippi would follow suit](#), and ease their restrictions as well.

The U.S.'s response to COVID-19 was nearly nonexistent. The federal government, from almost every avenue, failed to take a central leadership role in curbing the spread of the virus early on, and, as a result, the American people have suffered greatly. With the new Biden administration, there has been a more centralized response, but to fix the mess that they inherited from the Trump administration is a monumentally challenging endeavor.

Under the Trump administration, the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic was miserably inadequate; in fact, it was based on blind hope alone. Former President Trump even declared on July 1, 2020 that, "I think we are going to be very good with the coronavirus. I think that, at some point, that's going to sort of just disappear, I hope." The next day, the U.S. reported over [43,982 average daily new cases](#).

Time and time again, the U.S. people were failed by their government — from the failure to act

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After nearly one year of COVID-19, it is clear that the lessons we ought to have learned in the 1918 pandemic continue to go unregarded.

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In the U.S., playing the National

swiftly at the onset of the pandemic, to the continued failures on providing economic aid (which both the Trump administration **and** the Biden administration are guilty of so far). The U.S. people have paid the price. Currently, the Texas and Mississippi governors are choosing to ease restrictions despite health officials and science warning of the disastrous results that may occur. This is an act of the extreme.

As cases are getting better, and the glimmers of hope are beginning to shine, it is absolutely imperative to note that we are **not** out of the woods yet.

I can only imagine the disrespect and dismissal that all members of the health care community are feeling at such an announcement. For almost an entire year, our health care systems have been bursting at the seams, with the weight and trauma of this pandemic on their shoulders. In a time when our government could have worked to unite us, it failed, and the American people paid the price. Now, with new more infectious COVID-19 variants spreading around the country, and only a fraction of the population vaccinated, the decision to ease restrictions comes as a complete slap in the face.

To be clear:

Only 7.5 percent of Missippians are fully vaccinated.

Only 6.8 percent of Texans are fully

Anthem before sports games is seen as a tradition, but is it a tradition that, perhaps, needs to change?

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vaccinated.

The decision to ease restrictions will undoubtedly come with disastrous results — just as they did in 1918.

Featured Image: Courtesy of Bruce Plante



Jackie Au

Jackie Au is a fourth-year Political Science major with a minor in Anthropology. This is her fourth year working for the QC and her third year as a Section Editor for Campus Life. She is also a member of the College's Women's Water Polo team. Her hobbies include road cycling, making pottery, and attempting to sell her silly little pots.