

# *The Current*

*Issue 7 (Newsletter 4)*

*April 23 2020*

## *The Pandemic That Brought Us Closer Together* *By Bella Howe*

It's clear that the notorious coronavirus pandemic has forced billions of people to take action by self-isolating themselves. Economies are closed and governments are strongly advising citizens to avoid public places and any forms of social contact. Most of us have been confined to the comforts of our home, away from the outside world. We have been advised to stay far away from people physically, but this does not mean we are alone. In fact, this unique form of a catastrophe has given us a chance to form a bond of solidarity between one another.

With educational institutions shutting down, students are returning home to their families. Families are being presented with the opportunity to reunite and find time for one another. There are no longer excuses to skip out on family dinners or avoid game night. The whole world has been given a once in a lifetime opportunity to become closer to those that love us most, family. Take the time to cook a meal with your brother or garden with your grandma; after all, what time has ever been so ideal to grow closer?

Though we are restrained from the ability to visit friends, that does not mean we are completely restricted from any forms of communication. The world has never witnessed such advanced technology as we have at this moment in time. Multiple platforms such as phone calls, facetime, Zoom calls, emails, texting, and social media give us the opportunity to reach out to people and have a conversation. You can try calling up an old friend that you lost contact with. Or maybe make a pen pal and start writing letters to them asking them about how they have been experiencing the quarantine to gain a new perspective on the situation.

Not only has the quarantine brought us together, but also as a helpful giving community. Some neighborhoods have started organizing volunteer organizations to help those in need to get the supplies necessary for their families. With the elderly being most susceptible to the virus, such aid is extremely helpful in flattening the curve. According to the Boston Globe, Boston local Jeff Howe proposed to his neighborhood to create a program to help those that are most susceptible to coronavirus in the area of Cambridge. Many people began to volunteer immediately in response to Howe's proposal. Later on, he figured out that there were resembling programs in the area attempting to create a similar project. The Cambridge Mutual Aid Program gathered around 300 volunteers in total devoted to helping out their neighbors.

Significant others are finally finding quality time to spend with one another as well. Relationships are being reconnected and strengthened. Forced to spend months in the same house as your partner can cause a diverse set of emotions to emerge. On the podcast "This American Life", Ira Glass interviews couples therapist Esther Perel on episode 701 titled "Black Box". Perel states "[The lockdown is] a relationship accelerator...[that] rearranges the priority and

throws the superfluous overboard” (701:Black Box). Perel explains that quarantine forces couples to surpass the honeymoon phase of a romantic relationship and face the simple and rough-edged versions of one another. Couples’ relationships are put on the line as there is no way to run away from one another. Once again, it is an opportunity to take advantage of in order to see through whether or not a relationship is functional.

Although it is easy to feel alone when stuck in your house for days on end, remember that you are not the only one. Nearly everyone across the globe is confined in their house just like you. Call a friend from Italy or the Philippines and you will quickly notice that we are all facing the same situation. Rich or poor, Hispanic or Chinese, your susceptibility is just the same. A phenomenally equalizing event is in our hands. This is something that rarely one gets to experience in their lifetime. Although it is a catastrophe that is putting many lives, jobs, and families at risk, it has given us the gift of taking the time to mend the other counterparts of our lives.

## **Fun Things To Do with friends During Quarantine**

### **By Colin Murphy**

I am sure we have all been trying to talk to our friends during this time of quarantine, whether that be virtually or in person 6 feet apart. This is a struggle that many people around the world are facing each and every day during this worldwide pandemic. Today I will be sharing a list of 5 ways to spend time and have fun with your friends virtually, in order to stay clean and safe during this quarantine.

The first topic is a very common card game that the majority of homes across America have. Cards Against Humanity “... is a party game for horrible people. Unlike most of the party games you've played before, Cards Against Humanity is as despicable and awkward as you and your friends. The game is simple. Each round, one player asks a question from a black card, and everyone else answers with their funniest white card.” If you have not heard of this game you must check it out! The reason I say you can play this with friends safely, is because they have just announced a free online version with voice chat! Facetime with your group of friends, sit back, and enjoy a couple rounds of cards against humanity!

Do you ever want to watch a movie with friends, but then realize you are stuck at home miles apart from one another? Now with a Netflix viewing party, you are able to watch movies with your friends at the exact same time. Basically the downloadable file adds voice chat and cameras to the netflix browser so you can pick a movie together and watch it at the exact same time! All while keeping clean and staying away from the coronavirus.

Virtual trips have become a must while everyone around the world is stuck at home. Unfortunately, this whole quarantine business means that going to places like Israel isn’t really a possibility right now. But that doesn’t mean you can’t enjoy all the beauty this little country has to offer – just check out some videos compiled online highlighting all of the most gorgeous places in Israel, and keep them in mind for when you do make it there. They have also made these videos for places such as the Hawaiian Islands, The Bahamas, The Maldives, and hundreds of other exotic destinations around the world.

Now that you have all this free time, it may be a good idea to pick up those books you have hidden away in your home. Many friend groups across the world have decided on books to read together. They then proceed to purchase the book online (if they do not own a copy) and

read it chapter by chapter. At the end of each chapter these friend groups then have book club meetings, where they report on either a group chat via text message, or facetime.

What about all these clothes that we have at home? We need to show them off to somebody. Now that nobody can go out and about showing off their favorite outfits each and everyone wants to show them off somewhere. Friend groups across the United States have been doing “online fashion shows” in order to show off their favorite outfits each and every day. Pick up a notepad and give each friend a score out of 10 on their outfit. Add up the totals from each voter and give the outfit a total score. At the end of the game, the player with the most points wins the fashion show.

Throughout this quarantine, this idea of doing fun things with friends has come across as very hard to do. As long as you both have an internet connection and some sort of device to speak with one another, there are so many possibilities of what you guys can do. Just be creative and make up games such as the fashion show, or even have an art show. Good luck, have fun, and stay clean!

## **Anti-Quarantine Protests**

### **Theo Detweiler**

Protesters gathered in Maryland, Michigan, Texas, Colorado, and Wisconsin last week against the “stay at home orders” issued by many state governments in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The protesters carried signs like “I need a haircut” and “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death”, demanding a “reopening of the economy”. Few wore protective face masks or abided by the “social distancing” recommendations of six feet. In video interviews, some protestors acknowledged the danger of coronavirus but saw the present restrictions as excessive. Others seemed to completely reject the idea that the virus even exists.

Following the protests, a viral photo emerged from the streets of Denver. The photo, taken by a Colorado-based freelance photographer depicted two Denver healthcare workers in scrubs standing in the crosswalk, blocking the cars of the “open the economy” protestors in a peaceful counter-demonstration. One car passenger holding a “Land of the Free” sign yelled, “Go to China if you want communism”. Regardless, the two healthcare workers held their ground until being asked by police officers to move off the street.

These protests coincided with President Trump hinting at hopes to “reopen” the country soon, despite health experts calling for continued self-quarantine guidelines. The president also soon began tweeting against states’ self-imposed restrictions with the tweet “LIBERATE MICHIGAN”, “LIBERATE VIRGINIA”, sowing discord in the midst of this global pandemic.

The demonstrations against these restrictions were preceded by ads on Facebook saying “the people are rising up against these insane shutdowns”. The ads were issued by the Convention of States. Beneath its name, the Convention of States is a well-funded and calculated network of right-wing figures. The organization got off the ground five years ago through a large donation from Robert Mercer — a billionaire hedge funder and primary investor in Cambridge Analytica. Though its initial goal was to push for a balanced-budget, the group now takes its right-wing sentiment to foment these protests in coalition with other groups and the Trump administration.

A prominent organizer of the protests in Michigan was Meshawn Maddock, a campaign advisor of the President, and the online advertising for the Michigan protests was covered by the Michigan Freedom Fund, which has ties to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Finally, the Texas demonstrations were spearheaded by the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF). The foundation’s current vice-chairman is a founding board member of the Citizens for Self-Governance (the parent organization of the Convention of States). Brooke Rollins, the TPPF’s president until 2018, is now an assistant to the President in the Office of American Innovation.

The protestors last week, and this network of right-wing groups seem to overrepresent public disapproval of the stay-at-home orders since there tends mostly be public support for the measures, based on Quinnipiac polling. In this case, the protestors do not seem to be the “silent majority”.

## **Severe Weather Patterns Affect the Nation**

### **By Aaron Bond**

The Southern portion of our country was already in dire straits as a result of the CoronaVirus, when suddenly the weather took a turn for the worst. Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana were struck with over 50 tornadoes, leaving over 30 dead and half a million without power. Louisiana's Monroe Regional Airport canceled all flights out of the state due to excessive damage to private aircraft. Additionally, citizens in Northern states, like Arkansas, Kentucky, and New York have been left without power as a result of these tornados. The four Southern states declared an additional state of emergency (the first was filed in response to the Coronavirus). Numerous states on the Eastern seaboard, including New York, Massachusetts, and Maine, were pummeled with thunderstorms, heavy rain, and flooding.

Tornado warnings remain in effect for many Southern states, as the National Weather Service predicts that more may be on the way. Mississippi governor Tate Reeves stated, "This storm was as bad or worse than anything we've seen in a decade", noting that these tornadoes were "affecting almost every region." "We are used to tornadoes in Mississippi. No one is used to this. Winds topped 200 MPH. The trail was long and devastating."

On April 17, the National Weather Service reported a staggering 131 tornadoes, making this year's storm season the worst in nearly a decade. ABC Birmingham's meteorologist James Spann had an optimistic attitude despite this, when he said, "I think Alabamians are tired of dealing with COVID-19, and after last Sunday, tired of dealing with severe weather... We don't do this to scare anyone or make them more anxious, but at the same time we have to let you know there is a risk of severe thunderstorms. ... We will get through the day together."

Although Southern storms have subsided for the moment, Northeastern states are expected to endure winds of up to 60-70 miles per hour, along with heavy rainfall in the coming week. Rich Reichmuth, chief meteorologist for Fox News stated that, "We are watching the potential for severe weather today across two areas, one of them the Northeast...From D.C. up toward Boston, we could see the potential for large hail, even damaging winds, perhaps even isolated tornadoes and then the other area, across the Southern Plains."

The onset of these severe weather patterns will only prove to make efforts to limit the Coronavirus significantly more difficult in these areas of the country. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts that over 30 million Americans may be hit with severe weather and potential power outages.

These Northeastern storms are a result of a cold front from the Great Lakes region, in conjunction with a strong jet stream. However, due to currently low humidity levels in much of the East Coast, the storms will likely not be as damaging as those in the South, as they have significantly less potential to grow and become damaging. Winds are not expected to last more than several hours, and rain will be intermittent, though wind chill warnings are in effect for much of the area.

President Donald Trump promised last week that, "My administration will do everything possible to help those communities get back on their feet. We're speaking with the governors and representatives. FEMA is already on its way, and they got there — as soon as we heard the word, I said, 'Get out there.' So FEMA is there, and you know the great job that FEMA does. It's, really, something very special"

# How will the world change after this pandemic?

By: Jacqueline Pernice

A pandemic has unfolded, forcing the world to self-quarantine and isolate. As overwhelming and unbelievable as it may be, there is still some familiarity with the situation. There have been movies, TV shows, and other films that portray similar issues. People knew roughly what it would be like, yet somehow this makes the situation no less strange, but in fact more so. People constantly refresh the news, as so much could have happened since the last refresh.

Crises can shape how we live in the present and future. In the field of crisis studies, hundreds of experts devote their lives to mapping out how these sorts of disasters (and pandemics) will forever affect us.

Looking at the pessimistic view, experts say that this crisis could simply make bad things worse. "People who study disasters – and especially pandemics – know all too well their tendency to inflame xenophobia and racial scapegoating" (The Guardian). During past pandemics, such as the Black Death in the 14th century, towns isolated themselves and warded off outsiders. According to The Guardian, "Wikipedia now has a page collating examples from more than 35 countries of 'xenophobia and racism related to the 2019-20 coronavirus pandemic': they range from taunts to outright assault."

As the author Shoshana Zuboff discusses the situation of 9/11 in her book, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, she reminds us about the change of mindset during that time. "In the course of a few days," Zuboff says, "the concern shifted from 'How do we regulate these companies that are violating privacy norms and rights' to 'How do we nurture and protect these companies so they can collect data for us?'"

As for the future, Coronavirus is one of the biggest global crises since World War II. However, these two impactful events have similarities: they both require extreme amounts of global cooperation. Each one obliges changes in behavior/habit in order to reduce the suffering of the next day. "Both problems were long predicted with great certainty by scientists, and have been neglected by governments unable to see beyond the next fiscal quarter's growth statistics" (The Guardian). Overall, this pandemic will unquestionably affect our economy, government, and all ranges of business and lifestyle.

On the positive side, people all over the world are finding ways to communicate and help each other through this time. "The Italian political scientist Alessandro Delfanti said he was finding hope from a post-outbreak wave of strikes roiling Amazon warehouses in the US and Europe, and also the steps that workers across different sectors of the Italian economy were taking to help each other secure equipment they needed to stay safe" (The Guardian).

Covid-19 has also helped us to visualize the drastic change of our environment. Since the virus has decreased traffic and industrial activity, air pollution has significantly dropped. According to scientist Marshall Burke, "in China alone, emission reductions since the start of the pandemic had in effect saved the lives of at least 1,400 children under five and 51,700 adults over 70."

The future will be significantly impacted by this unimaginable event, and many are unable to fathom the changes to come. This time has developed a new consciousness—it has shown us that from these peculiar events, anything, at any moment, can change. We all must remember, even with the familiarity of this situation, we're not still watching the movie, we are composing one which is developing day by day.

## **Put away your passports!** **(How to travel this Spring break without leaving your house)** **Sophia Pilot**

The coronavirus pandemic has canceled spring break travel plans. With the U.S. imposing travel bans, traveling out of the country is not in the picture. There is no point in traveling internationally because once you arrive you are advised to quarantine for 14 days due to possible exposure to the virus from traveling. With mandates occurring daily, it is safer to virtually travel this spring break from your house. It may be tempting that domestic flights are so cheap, but remember they are cheap for a reason. When you arrive at your destination, you will find that most attractions and restaurants are closed and locals are socially distancing in response to the CDC's recommendations. It is not the right time to experience a new city. More and more articles are released each day about college spring breakers testing positive for the coronavirus; you don't want to be the headline of the next big story, so here are other ways to enjoy your annual spring break vacation from your bedroom.

Everything was prepped and ready for the safari, the lions were sleeping, the flies were buzzing, and the tent was lit, except I was driving through the African Desert from my couch. Many online travel sites are offering virtual traveling. From the comfort of your own home, you can travel around the world, listen to opera performances, visit aquariums, tour museums, and more. If you are looking for entertainment or missing your annual spring break trip due to the coronavirus pandemic, virtual traveling is the closest thing you will experience.

Through Google's Arts and Culture site, you can take guided tours of famous landmarks and hidden gems. Google's Arts and Culture site offers various virtual museum tours. You can tour world-renown museums while learning about art and history. You can also follow along with tutorials from the artist. This database enables you to explore museums without the lines and all the walking. You can experience exhibits that are usually closed to the public or hard to get to.

If museums aren't your thing, they have several other ways for you to get your travel fix. They are highlighting a collection, Heritage on the Edge, a culmination of historic sites affected by climate change and their response to the destruction. This experience allows you to explore the 3-D structure and raise awareness to this issue. Google's Arts and Culture teamed up with national parks to bring nature to your household. You can experience Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park in Hawaii, Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico, Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah, and The Dry Tortugas National Park located in Florida. During this adventure, you will do everything from star gazing to climbing in volcanoes.

Google Maps virtual treks enable you to avoid the crowd that popular outdoor destinations bring. Hike the Great Wall of China and maybe you will be inspired to get exercise. On Google Maps, you can tour the Eiffel Tower, Taj Mahal, the Great Barrier Reef and so much more. Google's Arts and Culture also offers virtual street view tours. The food tours are equipped with recipes and history. Travel through several countries in one day and hear stories from people who lived through the Holocaust and other historic events. If you really want to escape the world right now, board a spaceship and take a trip to the International Space Station. Taking a virtual vacation is great for entertainment and education. Virtual travel is incredibly convenient, and who knows maybe it will be the new normal after the pandemic is over.

Plan your next trip. Once this virus is over everyone will be flying to reunite with family, friends, or just want to escape their house. It is not recommended purchasing flights because there is no telling when this virus will be over and several airline companies are establishing a no-refund policy. However, what is recommended is getting ahead of the crowd and planning your next vacation. You can look online for travel guides. Travel and Leisure have great travel guides, trip ideas, and hotel reviews, or open a map and decide where your next adventure will be. Also, you can decide on a location with a climate that will be suitable for any time of year because we don't know when restrictions will be lifted and it will be safe

to travel again. While your passports are away, there are ways to travel from the comfort of your own home.