

Pandemic navel-gazing

Yes, here are another 800 words about a subject we're all fed up with. I am truly sorry, but I need to get this off my chest. The Coronavirus pandemic has devastated a large swath of MY country, killing and infecting hundreds of thousands of MY fellow citizens. It is most certainly responsible for a spike in suicides, depression, increased drug dependency, mental or emotional illness, child abuse, divorce and been the cause of heated arguments among friends and strangers. It has led to the nationwide neutering of our educational system and an increase in illiteracy of our schoolchildren and the elimination of minimum standards for graduating high school...

It even got an aging, cognitively-challenged, ineffectual, career politician with no leadership skills elected President.

It has cost our economy trillions of dollars and made the chasm between the Left and the Right in our country look like the Grand Canyon. It has unleashed the power lust of many of our governors to cross the line between sound decision-making and tyrannical rule and allowed our legislators to pass new laws that have severely limited or eliminated our freedom to gather as citizens.

We Americans are rapidly losing our individual rights to bare our faces and protect our bodies from an unwanted medicine. 'Just saying no' to a vaccine that has been approved by the FDA earlier this week (no matter it has not undergone sufficient trials and testing among some of the more vulnerable groups in our society like children or pregnant women) will soon be equated with treason. Some of us have lost our parents and grandparents in nursing homes due to irresponsible practices and have watched while officials from the CDC and the NIH repeatedly contradicted themselves in Senate hearings and on the evening news about one policy or the other. We have lost confidence in our leaders' ability to lead and seen them cherry-pick facts to bolster their arguments for locking us down as a society. A few days ago our President basically told us to shut up and get vaccinated...or else.

Our school boards have become activist cells for collectivist autocrats that have little or no real concern for the students under their care and have willingly capitulated to powerful politically-motivated teachers' unions that walk in lockstep with Washington politicians or peddlers of pop science. We who refuse 'the jab' have become marginalized and turned into pariahs, outcasts or *enemies of the state* by the very people we elected to represent us. We were forbidden to pray but allowed to kill fetuses in the womb. Restaurants were made off-limits to the average man or woman except to hypocritical governors and mayors. Protesters were allowed to ply their trade and burn and loot sans masks (except for the balaclavas that hid their identities from the police) while the rest of us were commanded to wear one while jogging alone outdoors.

Families with children are now being told their little ones must be vaccinated otherwise they will not be allowed any in-person classroom time. Colleges are refusing to admit unvaccinated students and businesses are imposing vaccine mandates on their employees. Refusal will get them fired as nurses in Houston have just experienced.

The point of my run-down of the disgraceful, long litany of social crimes that have been committed against all of us during this pandemic is to ask one simple question: "What have we learned from the last 18 months and what will do with what we've learned?"

From my perspective, I think the lessons of the 'great epidemic of the 21st century' are as plain as the masks on our face. Americans have realized that we are not living our mythology as "the land of the free and the home of the brave." We have been downgraded - moved from First Class to Economy or bumped from our flight to greatness altogether by our failure to recognize the severity of the threats that live *beneath the threats we can see*. While we were waxing indignant and complaining to each other, other people were stepping up to fill the power vacuum and increase their control over the rest of us.

This did not happen in the dark of night or at some remote mountain retreat by a cabal of the FBI's most wanted. It was a coup d'état, organized and perpetrated by other Americans who've been waiting for just the right moment or event to seize control and convince the rest of us that our individual freedoms cannot - and should not - be allowed to ride along in the *greater good* lane of the American superhighway. Their overarching propaganda relies on one simple admonition to those with seriously questioning minds: "What you don't know won't hurt you; you can trust us." This American does not.

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