

The Republican Virus

Michael K. Cantwell

No, I'm not trying to rename a deadly coronavirus, as did Donald Trump in his predictably pathological and puerile effort to divert attention from his complete incompetence by calling it the "China Virus."

I'm not even referring to a physical pathogen. The Republican Virus is a metaphysical disease, one that attacks the mind and soul. It is more infectious than the novel coronavirus and also more deadly. It begins with a fever of the soul that stokes and feeds on hatred and ignorance, crippling the intellect, erecting a barrier to facts, creating a favorable environment for propaganda, and eradicating all traces of empathy.

Patients afflicted with the Republican Virus have been voting against their economic interests for a half-century. More recently they've started to vote against their very lives, dying prematurely and unnecessarily in record numbers because they lack health insurance.

Moscow Mitch McConnell and his minions in the Greed Over People Party may be disappointed to learn that they cannot claim credit for turning medicine into a profit center or creating an entire industry that feeds on the misery and fears of sick Americans.

That goes back, as does so much evil, to Richard Nixon. As Michael Moore [related](#) to Amy Goodman on Democracy Now, a young researcher working on Moore's film *Sicko* found a Nixon tape in which he and John Ehrlichman discuss whether to support the creation of health maintenance organizations:

And Ehrlichman says to Nixon, "You're going to love this, because this is private enterprise. This isn't like some freebie thing." Nixon goes, "Oh, I like that. Tell me about it." And then Ehrlichman says, "Well, this is how it's going to work, these HMOs. They're going to make more money by providing less care. The less care they give them, the patients, the more money the company makes." Nixon goes, "Ooh, not bad!" . . . And Ehrlichman and Nixon are just kind of rubbing their hands, going, "Oh, this is great."

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"IF YOU DON'T VOTE, YOU DON'T COUNT"

"If you don't vote, you don't count"

was both the creed and the epitaph of Vernon Ferdinand Dahmer, Sr., president of the Hattiesburg, Mississippi, NAACP, who was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan on January 10, 1966.

Democrats outnumber Republicans locally and nationally, but we lose elections we should win because Republicans turn out in greater numbers.

Low turnout from Democrats in 2016 gave Republicans the White House, and high turnout in 2018 gave Democrats the House and many state Legislatures and Governors' Mansions.

If you don't vote, you dishonor the graves of the thousands who have died fighting for the franchise. Get registered if you're not already, make sure your friends are registered, and get out and get them out to vote.

*You don't need to live in Delray Beach to read *The Delray Democrat* or to write for it.

†Democrat: 1. An advocate of democracy. 2. a person who believes in the political or social equality of all people.

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The Affordable Care Act also treated healthcare as a privilege rather than a right, but it expanded the availability of insurance and provided subsidies to lower its cost for ordinary Americans, thus saving tens of thousands of lives.

The Republican Virus struck back swiftly, reaching pandemic levels in 2010. Independents and even some Democrats were infected, and the Greed Old Party gained control of both the House and the majority of State Houses.

Americans came to view government as a force for good, and greed as a societal evil. In the stirring words of the great American jurist Benjamin Cardozo, this is nothing less than the philosophy that animates our Constitution: that we “must sink or swim together, and that in the long run prosperity and salvation are in union and not division.”

In 1980 the Republican Virus was revitalized by a genial snake-oil salesman who had once described Medicare as a socialist plot to destroy America. He replaced the New Deal with the Raw Deal and stood on its head the world-view that had taken America from the Great Depression to the Great Society.

We broke the Republican Virus in 1932 and in 2008, both times after Republican control of the White House and Congress brought America to its knees.

Four years later they flipped the Senate, and on November 8, 2016, a day that will live in infamy, they won the White House.

Neither the rent boys and call girls that comprise the Greed Old Party nor its Sociopath-in-Chief delivered on the promise to replace the ACA with “something beautiful.” They managed to cause the premiums to rise, however, making insurance unaffordable for millions of Americans and causing tens of thousands of premature deaths. Americans living in red states whose governors refused free federal money to expand Medicaid are also dying needlessly. And now, untold numbers more will die in a pandemic made a thousandfold worse because Donald Trump is an incompetent, ignorant narcissist more concerned with television ratings than Americans’ lives.

The Republican Virus lay dormant for much of the last Century. Schooled by the Great Depression,

By the end of the decade, “I got mine, Jack” replaced “we must sink or swim together” as a personal and political philosophy. Government itself became a dirty word while greed was celebrated. Overpaid CEOs cheated, squeezed, and discarded workers, many of whom continued to vote Republican.

And now, as Trump struts and blunders and creates chaos, and as his insufferable, incompetent son-in-law creates more chaos, America leads the world in confirmed cases of Covid-19 and will soon lead in Covid-19 deaths.

We broke the Republican Virus in 1932 and again in 2008, both times after Republican control of both the White House and Congress brought America to its knees. And this November 3, 2020, we can and I predict will restore decency and competence and democracy to our country. We must, for it will be our last opportunity.

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COVID-19 Meets the US National Debt

Rob Resnick

As the U.S. deals with the COVID-19 crisis, the reality is a medical calamity wherein 150 million Americans may catch the virus with a real possibility of more than 2 million deaths. People may blame the Trump administration for failing to act for months, thus greatly exacerbating the crisis by delays in testing, protective equipment, hospital resourcing, and most importantly public awareness. Calling this a hoax for months has dire consequences. However, there is an extreme economic catastrophe directly stemming from the medical crisis. This, too, could have been significantly mitigated.

Trump's ineptitude, dishonesty, and total inability to lead caused the financial markets to crash much further and faster than would have otherwise occurred. Nevertheless, while not minimizing the awful loss to families who may lose a loved one to the disease, the economic crisis may have more serious impact on more individuals. To try and minimize the spread of the virus, most businesses must close for long periods of time, perhaps through the end of the crisis. We are

debt rapidly approaches 25 trillion dollars and we find ourselves on the precipice of disaster. Some might say if we are at 25, what is the big deal about 27? Senator Rand Paul and 8 Republican Senators, along with 40 Republican House members, callously oppose these measures. They would shamefully rather allow our citizens to suffer and even die. The truth is that we have no choice, we need to just do it. However, Congress must ensure they provide only necessary relief and in the most effective manner. There cannot be waste. For example, there must be a provision that mandates that any tax breaks or relief to businesses large and small only be used to maintain operations and employee salaries. They must prevent abuse such as stock buybacks, senior executive compensation, any overseas spending whatsoever, etc. When the crisis ends, there must be immediate austerity measures to address the national debt and that will involve different, but necessary sacrifice. The virus first.

The second obstacle is our failure to maintain critical

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not so concerned with corporate upper management who have sufficient resources to survive, but rather the millions of employees that will lose their jobs permanently or for extreme periods wherein they will not receive income. Very few working families have the resources to survive the many months of this challenge.

Congress appears poised to pass multiple stimulus plans and there really is no alternative. Experts predict the unemployment rate will exceed 20%! Most restaurants will be forced to close their business, many permanently. Stores are closing for the duration, laying off workers. With travel and entertainment halted, airline, hotel, and cruise industry workers are without jobs. Theater, amusement park, museum, and sports workers are all without work. The government simply must step in and ensure that working families have the basic means to survive throughout this crisis. If not, millions of people will lose their homes and starve. It is that simple. People will obviously need access to medical care including COVID-19 tests and treatment. The effort will be enormous if we are to save the country.

There are two additional obstacles. First, our national

manufacturing and industry within our own borders. The US, and many other nations, rely heavily on China for prescription drugs and medical equipment. Contrary to some media commentary, there is no actual national stockpile hospitals can use to save us. This is a stark lesson to our nation that we must not only preserve our manufacturing base for these and other essential products, especially those we may need in response to various crises, but also the ability to quickly convert to increased production of such goods. This is a national security issue as well as medically and economically crucial. We can only sustain ourselves in a crisis if we have the means to make what we need here at home. This will also allow us to go back to the days where we can help other nations struggling through a crisis. The US cannot remain so fundamentally reliant on China for so much of what we need.

The response to COVID-19 has been another abject failure by this administration. With so many lives at stake, we must come together at all levels and fix this. As we get through this crisis, we must then also ensure we are better prepared economically, medically, and industrially for future crises. Our country and our lives truly depend on it.

Covid-19: The Painful Price of Ignoring Health Inequities*

Andrew Resnick, Sandro Galea, and Karthik Sivashanker

Coronavirus disease (covid-19) provides a painful reminder of why inequities harm all of us. Equity is widely misunderstood as a zero-sum game—i.e. the gain of one individual or group results in the loss to another. Yet, covid-19 is able to enter and quickly spread because of the social cracks and fissures generated by inequities. These inequities, created and sustained by centuries of structural racism and other forms of structural discrimination, make large segments of our society vulnerable to catching and spreading a disease that affects all, with global socioeconomic impacts.

The U.S. is a case example of why racial, economic, and other inequities make us susceptible to pandemics. Ultimately these diseases are preventable only through social dependence and collaboration. 45% of U.S. adults between the ages 19 to 64 are inadequately insured and 44 million are underinsured as of 2018 leading to high co-pays and out-of-pocket costs. [1] These individuals may be less likely to seek care for early symptoms of covid-19, at high-risk of contracting the disease, and to then facilitate spread through whole populations.

Even more sobering is that more than 2 million Americans lack running water at home; and, Native American households are 19 times more likely (black and LatinX are twice as likely) than white households to lack indoor plumbing. [2] Thus, even basic infection control measures like handwashing become problematic. For impoverished countries, such problems can be the norm rather than the exception.

Education systems also face difficult decisions. In hard-hit areas within the U.S. and internationally, schools and universities are closing for weeks or longer. Many families depend on schools for nutrition and daytime supervision for younger children, and housing for older students. They may also lack technology for virtual education, leading to complex decision-making and delays in containment strategies.

The lack of guaranteed paid sick days for many workers, whose average wage is 10\$/hour, may cause many to continue to work when they should be self-quarantining. [3] Telework is sometimes impossible for these workers, whose responsibilities require in-person interaction (e.g., home health

aides). For households that depend on income from multiple adult workers or adult workers with multiple jobs, quarantine may not be a financially viable option.

Our treatment of undocumented populations, in the U.S. and abroad, also highlights the intersectional nature of inequities. These communities, lacking in basic resources like healthcare access, and fearing deportation and retaliation, have little incentive to report symptoms of covid-19. In many countries, they are forced into cramped and overcrowded conditions that expose them to human trafficking, sexual and physical violence, and transmissible diseases including covid-19. Such conditions are mirrored in other marginalized and forgotten communities, like our prison population. Ethnic minorities are grossly overrepresented in these communities—reflecting our historical legacy (and current reality) of racism. They are also the ones affected first and hardest. We see these currents of xenophobia and racism gaining strength as nationalism across the globe, contributing to fear, mistrust, and unwillingness to work together toward a common goal.

Several thoughtful recommendations have emerged for addressing inequities to improve our emergency preparedness for viral pandemics. [4] These recommendations range from the common sense (e.g., identify disadvantaged populations before a pandemic to address barriers to care) to more aspirational (e.g., develop international agreements to enable timely distribution of vaccines to disadvantaged groups). [4] Unfortunately, we are quick to respond when there is an urgent risk to our own safety or those we care about; and quick to forget when the crisis has passed and the only perceivable danger is to ‘others.’ Our tendency to distance ourselves from those we view as alien or intrinsically different from us puts everyone in danger. It is a fundamental misunderstanding of a risk that is always there and that can be mitigated only through effective contingency planning, requiring trust and a common denominator of commitment to our shared humanity.

With the covid-19 pandemic upon us, there is little question that we must act with urgency. It may be too late to prevent the wide spread of covid-19, but we might be able to mitigate its impact. Recognizing the significant gap in our preparedness

around inequities, the state of Massachusetts in the U.S. has created a taskforce convening stakeholders from many different sectors—from healthcare to education. The goal is to rapidly develop a set of policy recommendations focusing on addressing the disproportionate burden that covid-19 will have on disadvantaged populations.

A range of potential approaches to help low-wage workers, people from ethnic minorities, immigrants, older adults, people with disabilities, and other historically oppressed groups all merit consideration. Some are specific to the U.S., like prohibiting Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) from accessing health care facilities, shelters, and quarantine facilities; and assuring residents that medical care, testing, and quarantine facilities will be available to everyone without being questioned about immigration status. Unlike other high-income nations with universal healthcare, the U.S. must also consider whether to offer free treatment and vaccines.

Other potential approaches could be relevant to all states and countries. These include: 1) funding community-based organizations to support immigrant populations; 2) updating unemployment benefits, paid time off, paid family medical leave, and parental leave benefits to cover people across the entire socioeconomic spectrum for the duration of a pandemic; 3) ensuring that public-facing employees (e.g., first responders, health care) have access to the training and tools they need to safely perform their duties; 4) improving sanitation, and providing access to medical services, testing and quarantine facilities, for nursing homes, shelters, prisons, detention centers, and people living on the street; 5) providing assistance to support basic needs like food for people in quarantine and clothing for those declining emergency shelter; 6) offering free meal delivery or pick-up for children receiving food assistance; 7) bolstering nutrition assistance programs so people have food to endure a 14-day quarantine; 8) increasing accessible care for people with disabilities in the event that normal support systems are disrupted; 9) accelerating broadband internet access to rural communities to increase opportunities for virtual work; and, 10) directing funding to government agencies and health departments to cover unexpected costs.

Other approaches can look toward preventing the next pandemic. For example, increasing investment in homelessness prevention activities will enhance the ability of individuals and families to weather public health emergencies such as infectious

diseases.

It clearly serves all of us to end to the covid-19 pandemic quickly. But it is also time that we ensure that this pandemic does not widen the gaps between health haves and have nots. Doing so will require concerted effort towards ensuring health equity in a time of true and unique challenge for all of us.

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“You’re Doing a Heck of a Job, Donnie”

Michael K. Cantwell

A Facebook friend recently shared a slick post (likely made in Macedonia) that read “All my Trump hating friends you can send your Trump checks to me since he is not your President.” When I challenged him, he conceded that Trump “was slow to start” but claimed that Trump was “now moving quickly.” He concluded, “I don’t think anyone would have done it better.”

I told him it’s actually difficult to imagine anyone doing a **worse** job than Trump (other than perhaps Jared Kushner). Here’s why.

First, and dispositively, being “slow to start” is pretty much the whole ball of wax. Testing is the only way to break the back of the virus, and yet – and despite Trump’s claims to the contrary – over three months into the pandemic testing is STILL not widely available. Of course, as the [The Times](#) noted over three weeks ago, experts now believe “the virus has probably spread well beyond our ability to contain it [through testing].”

As the magnitude of the crisis finally penetrated Trump’s narcissism, he disclaimed responsibility and defended himself with multiple inconsistent arguments, claiming “[I knew it was a pandemic long before it was called a pandemic.](#)” and also that “[nobody knew there would be a pandemic or epidemic of this proportion.](#)” In the words of the Bard, “These lies are like their father that begets them – gross as a mountain, open, palpable.”

Trump repeatedly claimed that the threat was minimal and that his administration had it under control:

- [January 22](#): “We have it totally under control.”
- [February 2](#): “Well, we pretty much shut it down coming in from China.”
- [February 10](#): “Looks like by April, you know, in theory, when it gets a little warmer, it miraculously goes away.”
- [February 26](#): “Low Ratings Fake News MSDNC (Comcast) & @CNN are doing everything possible to make the Caronavirus look as bad as possible.”
- [March 4](#). “It’s very mild.”
- [March 8](#): “I’m not concerned at all . . . No, we’ve done a great job with it.”
- [March 10](#): “It will go away, just stay calm.”

Even after the severity of the threat became undeniable, forcing him to react, he resisted taking measures and signaled the desire to backtrack on the too-little-too-late measures he’d taken.

- On [March 23](#) he insisted “We’re not going to let the cure be worse than the problem.”
- The [next day](#) he said “I would love to have the country opened up and just raring to go by Easter.”

As to his claim that “no one could have known,” this just illustrates the extent to which Trump’s laziness, his profound and inexcusable ignorance, and his lack of concern for the well-being of anybody but himself render him unprepared and unqualified for the office he occupies, indeed for any office.

- [A week](#) before Trump’s inauguration, members of Obama’s administration briefed 30 senior officials of the incoming administration on responding to a pandemic, warning they “***could face specific challenges, such as shortages of ventilators, anti-viral drugs and other medical essentials, and that having a coordinated, unified national response was ‘paramount.’***”
- [Just last year](#) Trump’s own Department of Health and Human Services conducted an exercise that “***drove home just how underfunded, underprepared and uncoordinated the federal government would be for a life-or-death battle with a virus for which no treatment existed.***” The exercise modeled the path of a virus that originated in China and led to 110 million Americans being exposed, 7.7 million hospitalized, and 586,000 dead.

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- [January 29](#): A memo from Peter Navarro warned: *“The lack of immune protection or an existing cure or vaccine would leave Americans defenseless in the case of a full-blown coronavirus outbreak on U.S. soil. This lack of protection elevates the risk of the coronavirus evolving into a full-blown pandemic, imperiling the lives of millions of Americans.”*
- [February 23](#): While Trump continues to downplay the threat, a second Navarro memo warns *“increasing probability of a full-blown COVID-19 pandemic that could infect as many as 100 million Americans, with a loss of life of as many as 1.2 million souls.”*

Trump attempts to claim the mantle of “Wartime President” fail as miserably as his effort to rewrite history:

- Even though Trump has repeatedly invoked the Defense Production Act to require companies to provide military equipment, he balks at [using](#) the Act to ensure adequate supplies of masks, ventilators, and other urgently needed life-saving equipment.
- Rather than organize the production and distribution of vital medical supplies, he tells “governors to [try getting it yourselves](#),” creating [chaos](#) as states bid against one another as well as the federal government.
- Proving he [challenges](#) Gov. Cuomo’s estimate of the number of ventilators needed: “You go into major hospitals sometimes, and they’ll have two ventilators.”
- As venal as he is incompetent, he warns governors that if they want critically needed supplies, they have to show they are [appreciative](#) of his efforts.
- Trump undercuts the CDC call for cloth face masks to be used in public by emphasizing that it’s purely voluntary and adding that he won’t be using a mask. And today, one week before the Easter on which Trump hoped to have the country “raring to go,” there are 367,507 confirmed cases and 10,923 dead. We lead the world in the former and will soon lead in the latter. “Make Americans Dead Again” should be his reelection slogan.

The Skyhook Soars Again

David Kulick

Kareem Abdul Jabbar, for those who are relatively new to the world, was a star basketball player in the NBA from 1969 to 1989. After leading his New York City high school team to 71 consecutive victories, he was recruited for John Wooden’s UCLA team, where he won three consecutive national championships. Selected by the Milwaukee Bucks, he played for five seasons there, leading them to their first championship, before heading to the LA Lakers where he won five additional championships.

I wasn’t a fan. First off, his Skyhook routinely sunk my NY Knicks, both at Milwaukee and then the hated LA Lakers. Secondly, I was a bit put off that he changed his name from Lew Alcindor Jr to Kareem Abdul Jabbar. I thought it was disrespectful to his parents and embraced a religion I wasn’t familiar with. He was far from the only one of course, and as I grew to learn more about Islam I understood a bit more. Contrary to many people’s views, Islam is mostly a peaceful religion and all religions have some nuttiness in their holy books that in retrospect might better have been left out.

A few years back I began seeing some articles by him. Either in Truthout, or Reader Supported News, or one of the other online lefty mags that I subscribe to. Finally, after 50 years, I began to become a fan of KAJ. He wrote about being with Big Bird on Sesame Street, having mixed feelings about MLK day, and just snippets of brilliance with a skyhook or two of elevated thought crashing down in the middle. As I’m doing research for this article (ok, checking stuff on Google), I’ve come across many more of his writings and thoughts. How he wanted to be a writer but basketball got in the way.

So go to www.kareemabduljabbar.com/category/writing for some snippets. Or just stop at the main site (www.kareemabduljabbar.com) for the grand tour of what he’s up to. He has big hands, and they’re in a lot of things. He scores!

This is the article that made me decide to write about him: <https://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/61997-focus-trumps-coronavirus-reaction-reminds-of-hunters-nazi-conspiracy>

Take the (Indivisible) Pledge

THE 2020 CANDIDATE PLEDGE.

We must defeat Donald Trump. The first step is a primary contest that produces a strong Democratic nominee. The second step is winning the general election. We will not accept anything less. To ensure this outcome, I pledge to:

Make the primary constructive. I'll respect the other candidates and make the primary election about inspiring voters with my vision for the future.

Rally behind the winner. I'll support the ultimate Democratic nominee, whoever it is – period. No Monday morning quarterbacking. No third-party threats. Immediately after there's a nominee, I'll endorse.

Do the work to beat Trump. I will do everything in my power to make the Democratic Nominee the next President of the United States. As soon as there is a nominee, I will put myself at the disposal of the campaign.

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