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Jan Fran 22 April

Some thoughts on sacrifice in times of Corona ...

I keep hearing folks describe this pandemic as a kind of trade-off between public health and the economy. This trade-off is often framed around loss of life.

It usually goes something like this: if we ease the lockdown we'll see people die from the virus. If we prolong the lockdown we'll see people die from the consequences of possible economic collapse (i.e suicide, depression, poverty, ill health, violence).

We are led to believe that attempts to limit one set of deaths, will increase the other, that one group of people will have to sacrifice for the other. But whose lives are more important? Do we sacrifice the sick now to save the healthy later; the old to save the young; the poor to save everyone else? We are led to believe that this is our dilemma and it is an impossible one.

Hey, here's a fun thing to think about: guess how much Jeff Bezos made today?

Jeff Bezos made 17 thousand dollars. But he didn't make it in one day. He made it in ONE SECOND. Every single second Amazon is netting 17 thousand dollars worth of sales (this is in Australian dollars BTW) and this is happening SPECIFICALLY during this pandemic as more people seek deliverable supplies.

Jeff Bezos is now worth 216 BILLION dollars and you know what, good on Jeff Bezos! I mean, the man is clearly providing a service that people need. And whatta world of opportunity and promise we live in where a person can turn an idea into multi-billion dollar empire, amirite?! That is #inspo, please speak at my conference, Jeff.

Unfortunately, that's not quite the world we live in.

We live in a world where, in the middle of a pandemic, one man makes 17 thousand dollars A SECOND and another is buried in a mass grave because his family can't afford a funeral.

It's a world where the homeless sleep in socially-distant quadrants in the carpark of hotel while above them thousand-dollar-a-night rooms sit empty.

It's a world where folks are protesting their right to get sick in a country they can not afford to be treated in.

One thing this pandemic has done is exacerbated the gross inequalities we always knew existed. It has exposed them, brought them to the surface as the bodies of the poor and the desolate continue to be stacked beneath the ground.

The framing of this pandemic as 'lives lost now VS lives lost later' is really just us tryna work out which sections of our society are more productive, more useful, which sections of our population are going to best replicate the system that was in place before all this Covid/pandemic/lockdown malarky.

I mean, we all wanna get back to how it was ASAP, right? Now that we think about it we were having a great time. The system was working. But for who?

Not for the man whose body now sits in a mass grave on Hart Island NY, it wasn't. Not for the homeless sleeping in their car park quadrants, it wasn't. Not for the nearly 40 million Americans living below the poverty line, it wasn't. This is the system we will replicate.

It is right to talk about sacrifice in this dark and uncertain time. I guess we all have to make sacrifices at some point so if not now, when? If not me, who? Before you answer that, know this:

Twenty-six individuals own as much wealth as HALF the world's population - Lemme say that again: TWENTY SIX people (two. six) own the same amount of wealth as 3.8 BILLION PEOPLE.

That's worth remembering the next time some legend waxes lyrical about why you might need to sacrifice yer nan for the sake of the economy. Maybe those 26 people should sacrifice the spoils they've reaped from a system that now needs saving from itself.

We do indeed have a dilemma but it is not an impossible one. Maybe we actually don't need to ask those who have the least to sacrifice the most, maybe it's the other way around. Maybe that's the trade-off.

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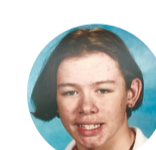
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