

## Covid-19 diary, 2020

Note: <https://covid19.omeka.net> -- that's the web site of "A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of Covid19." Upload there when this is all over.

Note: The teenager behind [adopt.a.block.dtjc@gmail.com](mailto:adopt.a.block.dtjc@gmail.com) asked me to keep count of the number of bags of trash I retrieve in the neighborhood. So here it is, starting from mid-June.

June 23: 4 small bags

July 3: 3 small bags

July 7: 1 large bag, 2 small bags, and a few things that didn't fit, like a box and an umbrella

July 13: 2 large bags, 1 small

July 31: 3 small bags, 1 large bag

August 10: 5 small bags

September 7: 8 small bags

September 17: 1 small bag

## February 25, 2020

Caitlin Rivers, PhD @cmyeaton: Do you remember on Feb 25 when @DrNancyM\_CDC said "disruption to everyday life might be severe"?

I'm inserting this later, but yes, I do remember. I also remember that she was yanked from public view immediately thereafter.

[ Since I didn't know when I started that this might have other readers, I will insert a few notes as I review it -- I'll put them in square brackets like this one. The next entry seems is actually the first -- the items above were prepended during the year. I was living with my husband Henry in an apartment building in Jersey City, NJ, close to the Hudson River. ]

## March 24, 2020

When did all this start? We watched the news all through February, and by the beginning of March, it was time for local changes to begin, and restrictions have been getting progressively more stringent. (School shutdown March 18th, stay at home order March 21)

My tai chi school had to figure out how to comport itself -- there were one or two early advocates for shutting down classes, while one or two other people were exceptionally reluctant. We finally did the right thing just a couple of days before we had no choice any longer. Then we had to decide whether to cancel the summer training at Smith College in early June, and eventually we made that decision. Now we're figuring out how to teach classes on line. Greg taught the first zoom session of qi gong last Sunday morning, and it was lovely.

Figuring out how to live under lockdown has been a been a lot of work!

On March 16th, I went to Highland Park to hang out with [my grandson] Evan and was just extra careful to wash my hands and we all avoided touching. By yesterday, I decided I shouldn't go -- I think Michele's risk may be high (diabetes, obesity), and Henry's risk is also probably higher than mine. I bought some Tinker Toys to prepare for a play date, but they haven't come yet. We went ahead with our first FaceTime play date yesterday, and it was a lot of fun. We chatted for a while, and Evan showed me stuff, and then he instructed me to download Roblox [ a gaming platform with many games for children] and he showed me how to set up a pizza shop. Very nice.

Then there's our physical health. I went up and down the stairs in the building once, and I've taken several walks. But I wanted to continue working with my physical trainer. His employer figured something out, and we had our first session this morning over google hangouts. Whew.

Then there's eating. Fortunately, Henry is the king of delivery services, and still learning, but unfortunately, a lot of [other] people seem to be using them that never did before, so it's really hard to get a delivery time. Still, after a couple of days when our supplies were running low, our refrigerator and our cupboards are now full of good healthy food. If I can ever find the bread I like, I'll be even happier.

We also had to figure out what to do about our housecleaner. I probed the building's policy yesterday, and got a pretty good answer: They don't want to be anybody's cop, but they ask us to only have people come into the

building that are really essential. So I told Angie not to come for the next month, and I'd pay her half the fee. Henry and I were not in agreement at first, and would have approached it differently -- I asked for permission while he would have gone ahead on his own -- but we worked it out nicely.

It's been very hard emotionally. I've had a lot of physical tension, a knot in my stomach a lot of time, and some sleeplessness. At other times, I'm calm and confident that I can do this. I'm not confident the country can do this. Even those of us who watched a lot of news were a bit slow to catch on to the main point: when 15% of the people who are sick require hospitalization, that's a load the hospitals can not handle. And it's made even worse by the lack of protective equipment worn by medical staff.

One of my emotional struggles as we've gone through all these difficult decisions has been the fear that I'm doing it wrong -- being too careful or not careful enough, mostly. That's very characteristic of me, I'm sure. It also reminds me of an article I read that said people are confused and disconnected as we wait for an impending crisis to land -- our guts tell us the situation is terrible, but we don't see it yet, so our minds have a hard time accepting it. The people who announce the danger the most loudly are accused of fear-mongering and exaggeration. I've watched other people in this state and felt it in myself.

### #glossary

New vocabulary for the age of covid-19 [I don't believe I had learned all these terms this early, but rather went back to fill in as I learned more.]

- PPE: personal protective equipment
- CFR: case fatality rate
- social distancing
- the correct use of the terms quarantine (for people who have been exposed) and isolation (for people who are known to be ill)
- fomites: objects or materials which are likely to carry infection, such as clothes, utensils, and furniture.
- $R_0$ , or  $R_{naught}$ : the reproduction number, or average number of people directly infected by someone in a community free of infection
- $R$  or  $R_e$ : the actual or effective average number, affected by population density, culture, and the level of immunity in the population

(I think this distinction is right.)

- normalcy bias, or normality bias: a tendency for people to believe that things will function in the future the way they normally have functioned in the past and therefore to underestimate both the likelihood of a disaster and its possible effects (wikipedia)
- PCR tests (polymerase chain reaction): tests for active infections
- clap-out: the term used in hospitals when staff lines up to applaud the discharge of a covid-19 patient.
- NPI: non-pharmaceutical interventions, like distancing and masks, or test-trace-isolate.
- ECMO machine: this machine oxygenates the blood of a very ill person

March 25

It's 1pm already, and what have I been doing? Last night's MSNBC news programs; morning stretches; some tai chi board business -- George wants a raise because his other sources of money have dried up; and muffins are in the oven.

It's been hard to practice tai chi because my left ankle has been painful for several weeks -- I need to stretch and roll my calves all day long, apparently.

I've designated Wednesdays as housecleaning days. I did the dusting and had to postpone the vacuuming when we got a phone call -- Henry spent some time helping Sheree to learn how to order groceries online because she's unwilling to enter a grocery store. After finishing my cleaning chores, I put on my weighted vest and went up and down 30 flights of stairs. Whew.

I think I got pretty frantic this morning -- too much news, so much overwhelming data, such incomplete data. Doing all those stairs helped calm me down.

Somehow my disagreeing with Sheree about how cautious to be is difficult for me -- just as it was difficult the other day to disagree with Henry about what to do with our housecleaner. Maybe when life is this uncertain, my

discomfort with disagreements is heightened. I have to remind myself that people can make different choices, and that each choice may be equally reasonable.

I started reading a book about the 1918 influenza. I'm skipping big sections about medical history and biographical detail about the men involved, in search of the story of the pandemic itself.

March 26

Second exercise session with Ken over google hangouts. We seem to be getting the hang of it.

My Tinker Toys arrived, and maybe Evan and I can figure out something to do with them.

I'm not going to include much covid news here, because there will be books. Boy, will there be books. But here's where we are now:

- more than 68K cases confirmed nationally, 990 deaths.
- NY: 33K confirmed cases, 325 deaths
- NJ: 4400 confirmed cases, 62 deaths
- lots of states with over a thousand confirmed cases now
- hospitals in NYC overloaded, other states' hospitals starting to overload -- Louisiana, Connecticut.
- more testing centers being set up in NJ. I sent email indicating that I could help with answering calls to schedule appointments at a testing center. Uh-oh, they would need me to come to Secaucus. I said I would be reluctant to do that and asked for a description of the work environment; haven't heard back.

People are going to start saying "physical distancing" instead of "social distancing," to emphasize that we need social contact and social cohesion -- from a safe distance.

Gov. Murphy just reported 2492 more confirmed cases and another 19 deaths. Wow.

Did tai chi, bought some groceries downstairs, took a walk.

What have I done to be useful? I donated blood; donated money to the Food Bank (\$300, twice); bought a gift card at the local bookstore. I hope playing with Evan is useful to his parents. I signed up for a Jersey City "send a letter to a senior" program -- maybe I'll even get a letter [because I am over 65 myself!]. I wonder how they put their lists together.

And the NYT now says at least 81K cases, more than China or Italy. We're number one, all right.

Read some more of the flu history. Big differences, big similarities.

March 27

NYT this morning: 523.7K cases worldwide; 23.9K deaths; 171 countries. Cases rising fastest in Iran, Italy, Spain, Germany, France, and the US.

85K cases in the US, 1,271 deaths. (Cases known to be undercounted; deaths probably undercounted, too. People die before they can be tested.) NY: 39,987 cases; NJ: 6,876. Many other states' hospitals also in trouble -- lack of PPE and ventilators a steady drumbeat in the news.

Played Roblox with Evan for about an hour.

Went to the CVS and succeeded in getting ibuprofen, a couple of small bottles of hand sanitizer, and some H2 inhibitors for stomach acid.

I bought a paid zoom account, and I'm working on setting up a time for a family zoom call. And I signed up to send cards to seniors in downtown NJ. Maybe I'll even get one!

Went for a walk, took a shower.

There are now 8,825 positive test results in NJ.

I had a long conversation with [my sister] Betsy, learning how her family is handling things. Mike is working at the fire extinguisher company, and he'll lose some hours but stay employed; ditto for Kyle. Kevin is in Taiwan,

teaching English. Mason may have it tough -- he's still a pot farmer and gets paid under the table. Ed is busy finishing their house, and Betsy is working at home.

The non-employee members of the NYSTCC board [that's the tai chi school] had a meeting to discuss George's request for a raise, and voted to approve significant raises for both George and Steve.

Saturday, March 28

I've got a Zoom meeting at 10 to discuss the now-cancelled summer training. Hah, I was mistaken -- we haven't actually decided to cancel it yet, and we're going to continue in a holding pattern for a week or so, expecting Smith College to take the decision out of our hands. It seems quite obvious that it wouldn't be possible to maintain social/physical distancing practices in dorms, in the dining hall, and in most of our classes.

US: 102.6K positive tests, 1,646 deaths.

NY: 44635 positives,

NJ: 8825

Still not enough tests, testing very uneven. I don't know what modeling currently suggests about the true number of infected people.

NYC -- last night at 6 pm, 5,250 coronavirus hospitalizations.

Attended a tai chi class over zoom taught by the Chicago school. I had technical difficulties and bailed out early to talk to Preston on the phone.

Having lunch and catching up on twitter ... NJ is up to 11,124 positive cases, 140 deaths.

Wrote a letter to Chase [Bank] about an apparent problem in my credit card bill. I couldn't call because they have had to shut down some of their call centers, so they can't handle all the calls. There must also be a lot of people cancelling trips and events.

Now figuring out to create a zoom invitation and send it to my family --

having arguments with gmail. Interrupted by a long, wonderful phone call with Jim T. Then finished off the invitation.

A very zoomy, busy day. Finally roasted some vegetables, had dinner, listened to a couple of podcasts.

US up to 123K positives, 2.1K deaths. NYC: 53K, NJ: 11K. 18 states with more than 1K positives. It's all moving very fast now.

Whenever I talk to anyone, I ask them about their safety protocols. People are making a lot of different decisions on top of the basic distancing procedures. Some people want to "age" their mail for a couple of days before they open it, or wipe down the cardboard when a package arrives. Some people are doing something fairly elaborate to sanitize their food when they bring it home from the store or have it delivered. We're still refining our practices, I guess, and thinking about how far to go. When I get groceries downstairs, I want to wash my hands, unpack the groceries, and then wash my hands again. I'm not ready to start wiping it all down. But maybe we need to tighten up our practices with cardboard boxes.

And the national position on masks isn't clear. At the moment, the CDC doesn't recommend that we use them unless we're actually symptomatic, especially if we're coughing. If they change that position, that raises the question of where we're going to get masks given the scarcity of PPE. Should we be buying supplies that nurses and doctors can't even get their hands on? And what does the data say, really? I haven't seen any clear evidence that there's much benefit to healthy (or asymptomatic?) people from wearing masks. I did see one convincing argument that everybody should wear masks of some kind, because then the sick people won't be automatically stigmatized if they wear one, and therefore sick people will wear them. I have a cotton mask, not proper PPE at all, and I've started wearing it when I go into a store, but it isn't convenient to wear it when I take a walk -- my glasses steam up and my breath feels weird on my eyes. Let's see if Dr. Fauci takes a position on this.

Sunday, March 29

covidtracking.com shows 121,468 positive; 6,983 hospitalized; 2,045



deaths

#glossary

attack rate: the probability that a person will come to be infected during an epidemic.

infection fatality rate: the probability a person will die if infected. Whereas the CFR is the probability of death given that one comes to medical attention or has symptoms. Oh, I see. That should be higher.

I had a quiet morning, which was good after yesterday's busyness. I just attended Greg's qi gong class -- I'll have to remember some donations to the TCF and the local school. This afternoon, there will be a discussion among NYSTCC teachers to talk about what we can do over zoom. Right on the heels of that, I'm hosting a family call.

NJ: positive tests 13,386; deaths 161

End of the day. I did not manage my brain very well today. By the time the NYSTCC meeting and the family zoom call was over, I was on serious zoom overload and feeling cranky. And I was all wrapped up in the question about mask wearing and ended up doing a bit more research on the question. Growing numbers of people think we should be wearing masks, possibly to protect ourselves and certainly to protect others in case we're infected, whether we know it or not. The situations in which they're the most important, though, are in crowded settings like public transportation, and I don't know when I'll be in that setting again. Some people see mask wearing as one of the requirements for getting things moving again, along with extensive testing, contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation. Anyway, I'll stick with my plan to use my little cotton mask when I'm going to be in close proximity to another person for a couple of minutes.

One other element of the recovery plan mentioned above is the continued isolation of people over 60 until there's a vaccine. That is an idea that is too disturbing to contemplate. One day at a time, my friend.

So I'm still too agitated to sleep, but maybe I can lie in bed and listen to a podcast that has nothing to do with covid-19 and get myself settled down.

Monday, March 30

As I went to sleep, I wondered why I was getting so worked up about this mask issue, and realized I'm doing this again: trying to make sure I'm doing this exactly right. Sheesh. When even the experts aren't in full agreement about what we should be doing, I don't think that's the right way to think about it.

Hoping for a much quieter day today. Tidying up the pile of papers where I sit; ordering some more atorvastatin.

Went for a walk. I'm trying to avoid runners because I bet they are aerosolizing like bandits. I can usually step away, but when they come up behind me, it's hard to make extra space.

New Jersey's over 16 thousand cases. NYC is going to stop testing, reserving staff, PPE, and other tools for treating the sick.

I gave up on the Barry book on the 1918 influenza that I've been reading. I'm not interested in his emphasis (a lot of biography of doctors and others; a lot of medical history), and I find his writing painfully bad. I downloaded the Kolata book instead, and I'm immediately relieved to be in the hands of a decent writer.

For some more exercise, I put on my weighted vest and walked stairs again -- 30 flights. It's a good workout, leaving me pretty sweaty.

I haven't mentioned how many podcasts I've been listening to -- there are so many new ones dedicated to the pandemic (Coronacast from Australia, Public Health On Call from Johns Hopkins University, In the Bubble with Andy Slavitt) and many of the ones I already listen are discussing it as well (Radiolab, Lawfare). Those are all serious educational podcasts. For a lift, I listen to the same Bugle episodes over and over -- the old ones with John Oliver and Andy Zaltzman, and the new ones with Andy and his various collaborators.

We lost young women on both sides of our family in the 1918 flu. Mom's mother, Catharine Theresa McNiff Frazee lost her sister, who was a nurse.

She was escorting German prisoners of war in the US. And Dad's father, Norman Swayne, lost his younger sister Edith. She was a librarian in Brooklyn, NY -- something I hadn't known until today.

Oh my goodness, WHO stands by its recommendation that healthy people shouldn't wear masks -- but they didn't say anything about home-made or cloth masks; they referred only to medical masks.

One Zoom event today -- the Bellcore/Telcordia group that meets for pizza once a month met on Zoom. I can't usually make those events because of tai chi conflicts, but not now. It was good to see those guys.

Tuesday March 31

I'm trying to remember the last time I had any sustained f2f contact with another human besides Henry, and I guess it was March 16th when I visited Evan and maybe March 17th, which I think was the day I donated blood.

820 confirmed cases in Jersey City now, more confirmed cases than 24 US states, according to a tweet. A lot of testing is being done; we have a lot of cases to find, but that's only part of it.

Over 160K nationally.

I'm realizing more clearly how much other people's agitation gets me agitated. On the AT&T mailing list, a few people are afraid to touch their mail, and figuring out how to irradiate it; I keep seeing a video going around about how to clean all your groceries; so many people are worked up about masks (as I've mentioned in this journal several times already!). My personal trainer went on a rant about his fear that the government will force us all to be vaccinated, and that's somehow like women being forced to get abortions or people being put into Auschwitz. Whew. I wouldn't be surprised if I've shared too much agitation at times myself, with my obsession with information. Breathe, breathe.

My workout session was good this morning; I had a restful afternoon listening to podcasts. The hosts of "Reply All" spoke to listeners all around

the world: Shanghai, Sweden, Hong Kong, Algeria. Everyone is thinking about covid-19.

Globally: at least 839,200 infections; at least 41,343 deaths

US: at least 183,532 infections; at least 3,727 deaths

NY: at least 75,813 infections; at least 1550 deaths

NJ: 18,696; 267

I know two people who been diagnosed with covid-19, neither of whom had to be hospitalized -- one in Seattle, a woman about my age (68), who is recovering from covid pneumonia; one in NY, a man in his early thirties, who had a mild case. On a call last night with former or current Bellcore researchers, most people knew someone with the illness.

Suddenly I feel contented and calm. Who knows why? I did a load of laundry, got the mail, picked up a package, ate dinner, ate a cookie. There was some good in the sea of bad news -- the physical distancing being practiced in most population centers seems to be "flattening the curve." The bad news is all still bad: not enough PPE, from swabs to masks to ventilators; not enough testing; numbers of cases and deaths climbing everywhere.

Hey, future historian, don't forget to include the various seeding, or super-spreading, events, large and small. There were small events like the choir practice in Washington state and a funeral in Alabama. There were large events -- a particular soccer game in Italy, spring break on the beaches of Alabama and Florida, a conference in Boston in late February, Mardi Gras (Feb. 25) in New Orleans. And the religious communities in South Korea, Iran, Brooklyn, Lakewood, NJ, and Jerry Falwell Jr's Christian school in Virginia. Many nursing homes. A few other closed communities.

We're hearing doctors describe rooms full of people on ventilators, all in medically induced comas. Henry (my husband) was in the same situation 3 years ago as he recovered from a bowel perforation, and I remember how terrible his situation was when he came out of the coma -- he had a week or so of extreme confusion. He didn't know where he was or why he was there or why he was so weak. He thought he was being held against his will and was terribly afraid and confused. He couldn't distinguish his

nightmares from reality. I couldn't spend 24 hours a day with him, and there were several nights when I didn't have my sister or niece with me to help. And these poor souls have to go through that experience without any family members with them.

Wednesday April 1, 2020

I'm a bit ragged this morning. I woke up an hour or so after going to sleep full of bad dreams and fear, imagining that Jeremy and Michele were taken to the hospital and I had to take care of Evan. I was afraid to even go into their house, so what was I to do? I listened to an episode of the 99% Invisible podcast about the 1964 earthquake in Alaska, and that got me crying. Eventually, I got back to sleep.

Lunchtime. Feeling ok. I did some stretching, housework, exercise, and a little tai chi. I plan to take a walk after lunch and make a bean stew.

NJ 22,255 positive; 355 deaths

I didn't see any April Fool's jokes mentioned anywhere. We had no heart for it, apparently.

Thursday April 2, 2020

I took a wonderful nap, so I missed the walk. I did some exercise instead, while the bean stew was simmering, and then joined my Wednesday night tai chi class for rounds. I didn't watch the news before bedtime, and slept a lot better.

I texted with a friend in California yesterday, and we both commented on how strange it is to be peaceful in our homes and know what's going on outside. As I was going to sleep, I thought of it this way -- there are two great storms raging outside, the storm of the virus and the storm of unemployment and poverty caused by our necessary response to the virus. Both storms are much worse because we live in an oligarchy in which health care is treated like a privilege and half of American families don't have any financial reserves to rely on in an emergency. We already had decreases in life expectancy in some groups, which are being called deaths

of despair. Democratic politicians keep look at appalling behavior and saying, "This isn't who we are," but it seems that it is.

There remain many areas where we don't get clear guidance. Experts disagree about masks and the disinfection of groceries and packages. It will be interesting to see if the advice converges during the coming year or two. Many of my friends are following the strictest possible advice; I'm not sure where I sit. I keep splitting the difference.

I just finished watching my various tv programs recorded last night -- Samantha Bee, Stephen Colbert, Trevor Noah, and Rachel Maddow. Maybe I don't want to do that every morning -- it takes a while! It's better for my spirits than obsessing about the news every minute, and I'm starting to feel that stepping back from the news opens up some time I could use better. I'll have to think about that.

Today I felt different. It may be that I've entered a new stage characterized by less shock and more acceptance. It has a dark side, though, because I also feel as though it doesn't matter what I do, so I seem to be losing my sense of purpose. That will be a challenge for me. I don't like to feel useless.

For the last few nights, the lights on the Empire State Building have been flashing red. I'm not sure what symbolism they're reaching for, but it looks like a emergency light to me, like the lights flashing on the top of a police car or an ambulance. Trevor Noah joked on Twitter that it would be screaming all night until the emergency has passed, and that captures the tone nicely.

Oh, this mask business. More and more experts and politicians are advising us to wear cloth masks when we go out -- they're not that effective, but they're better than nothing and they don't take medical masks away from health care workers. I wore one when I took a long walk this afternoon. It's very strange for a glasses-wearer, because it isn't well sealed at the top, and my glasses fog up every time I exhale.

world: 981K cases; some counts say the number is already over 1 million  
US: 234K confirmed cases; 5708 deaths

NY: 92K; 2468

NJ: 25.6K; 537

That's really a lot of deaths in NY. That may be because they have stopped testing of most people outside the hospital, so deaths are rising faster than cases? I don't know. The lack of testing is a constant problem, and it is so in most countries.

I listened to an interesting Lawfare podcast in which people in many countries reported on their experiences: Iran, South Korea, China, Poland, England, ... It's amazing to be reminded of what a global illness this is. Each country has different shortages, different legal environments, different shutdown rules, different challenges. In France, they find it hard to stop kissing one another; in Mediterranean countries, people find it hard to give up going out; in Poland, they have less trouble staying home because they don't have a pub culture or a cafe culture; in Finland, they're more introverted, so they joke that this crisis was made for them.

I just read an article on medium.com that says our toilet paper shortage probably has nothing to do with hoarding. It's because people are all at home instead of in schools and offices, and the home toilet paper supply chain is completely distinct from the commercial supply chain. The toilet paper is different in quality and size, and it's made by different companies. They might even be using different paper mills. So the shortage won't get fixed overnight.

Friday, April 3

I had a session with Ken, my personal trainer, this morning. He kept having ideas that didn't quite match the equipment I have at home and my living room ended up full of unlikely stuff. Still, it was fun and I got sweaty.

NJ: 29,895 identified cases; 646 deaths.

I'm feeling pretty useless today. Oh, there are things I could do, but I decided to just feel it for a while, and I took a nap. Maybe now I'll actually write some Get Out The Vote letters for Swing Left's Vote Forward project. Music would help.

Wrote 4 letters, then walked up and down 30 flights of stairs. Now I feel better, and I remember that today's mild depression is just today's and doesn't mean I'll feel that way for 2 years.

Jersey City: 1104 confirmed cases (60% M,); 33 deaths (70% M, mean age 63)

Oh, I just saw a tweet saying that "vivid dreaming is incredibly common during this pandemic." Me too! Last night I dreamed that Governor Cuomo was testing people for the virus during his daily commute on a boat, and when I woke up in the morning, I was dreaming that Henry and I were waiting for instructions about how avoid a large pointy rock when we jumped off a cliff and landed on the ground. I was kind of thinking I wouldn't do it, actually.

Saturday, April 4

The number and type of events that spread the virus is amazing. Purim is suspected of being a spreading event, an airplane full of spring breakers went to Mexico and came back sick.

I subscribed to the local newspaper, the Jersey Journal, since the free press is an institution I have committed to supporting [following the advice of Timothy Snyder in 'On Tyranny']. I subscribe already to the NY Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian, The Nation, Atlantic, NJ Spotlight, a couple more; Henry subscribes to the Wall Street Journal, the New Yorker, and others.

I'm reading about covid-19 at nursing homes. "State officials said 132, or 35 percent, of the state's long-term care facilities had at least one patient with coronavirus as of Thursday, but the list of those facilities is not publicly available. Approximately 12 percent of the deaths in New Jersey were linked to nursing homes, the state said, but ..." there are examples of people dying before being tested.

In this time of feeling useless, I could explore why I feel the need to be useful. As I get older, I'm going to become less useful, less productive. Is



that acceptable to me?

I went for a long walk, and had a long phone call with Sheree, who is feeling better. She's continuing to be extremely careful to avoid becoming infected, and has even hired someone to do her grocery shopping for her.

I'm hardly keeping track of the numbers any more, but the number of confirmed cases in the world has topped 1.1 million. How many real infections? 2 million? 5? 10? No-one knows.

More than 300K in the US; same question about real cases.

Spain and France are hot spots now. Iran continues to be a disaster. In Niger and Cameroon, cases are doubling in 3 days or less.

NY: 3,565 deaths; NJ: 846 deaths.

Sunday, April 5

Last night as I went to sleep, I felt uncomfortably detached from the world. But I feel better today, and I just attended a qi gong class.

What a pleasant, easy day I've had. Henry and I took a short walk after lunch, and then I was getting ready to do some exercise in the apartment when Evan called, inviting me to play computer games for a while. I had to cut him off at 4:00 for the family zoom session. And now it's time to catch up on the news.

Oh, and I learned from Rick the name of our other great-aunt who died in the 1918 influenza -- Anna Clements, nee McNiff, age 42.

The news continues to be painful, though there's hope in New York -- it looks as though there will be enough beds and the number of hospitalizations may be leveling off. Still not enough ventilators, PPE, or staff, though. And the news about the many unemployed people is also dreadful -- so many people just a few weeks away from financial disaster.

Monday, April 6

I've seen a few articles now about the undercounting of deaths, because testing continues to be insufficiently available. More people dying in their homes without being tested; even coroners can't get test kits.

I'm having another pleasant day. I stretched and worked out in the morning, then took a walk along the Hudson with Henry -- the weather is just about perfect. We're wearing our cotton face masks, fogging up our glasses.

It's hard not to constantly feel rage and despair when watching the behavior of our national government. The drumbeat of awful news goes on and on. The firing of Captain Crozier; the firing of the IG who was a whistleblower in the Ukraine scandal; the feds intercepting state orders of PPE and then doing who knows what with those orders; the overall refusal of the Republican Party (federal and state) to support voting by mail; Trump and his team constantly repeating that the severity of the virus was something no one could have foreseen; Trump and his cronies beating the drum for one particular unproven medical treatment. It just doesn't end.

Rachel Maddow is listing case numbers at VA hospitals all over the country. Still, governors of smaller states, especially southern states, are not willing to institute strict stay-at-home orders.

We keep reading about religious institutions in southern states taking ostentatious pride in continuing to hold services, putting their faith in God. I wish they could be required to attest that they would decline medical attention should they fall ill.

And some of these states, like Indiana, are starting to have huge numbers of people in their intensive care units. I don't know if Indiana's governor is one of those who have been so tardy to acknowledge the seriousness of covid-19.

The Navy ship, the Comfort, that is docked in New York City, has been unwilling to accept covid patients until today. Overflow beds are going up everywhere, from conference centers to churches to parks.

I've been thinking a lot about where to make donations. So far, I've donated \$600 to a food bank; a similar amount to my tai chi school and the Tai Chi Foundation. I subscribed to a local newspaper. Today, I gave \$50 to the Wisconsin Democratic Party.

And thank you Randy Rainbow for lifting my spirits when I'm really glum and angry. [He posted videos on twitter.]

Tuesday April 7

I spent some time figuring out what to order from Fresh Direct. It is dawning on me that I have to change the way I shop -- predicting what I'm going to need instead of waiting until I run out. Then I had my exercise session with Ken.

My sister Betsy wrote that her son Mason is in financial trouble. He has been working off the books for a pot farmer, so he won't get any of the financial assistance the federal government is paying out -- neither the unemployment insurance nor the flat payment. I've been giving a cash gift to each of the nieces and nephews, and he hasn't received his yet, so I'm going to give him \$120/week for a month and then we'll see how he's doing after that. He's been living in his van for a few years, but it's starting to get old. Betsy and Ed aren't sure what to do. They'd invite him to live with them, but they think he'd be a bit of a health hazard, since he wouldn't follow distancing practices very well.

Wednesday April 8

Donated \$500 to ActBlue Charities for Coronavirus relief. Most of the money I'm pouring out (well, compared to my usual rate) is coming from a Fidelity Charitable account set up for the purpose a couple of years ago when the government blocked the tax deduction for charitable donations. It's dreadful that so much charity is needed. If we had done good testing and tracing, and had good quarantine and isolation, we wouldn't have had to shut down work and schools -- if South Korea and Singapore are any example. And if we had decent health care and a robust union movement or a reasonable minimum wage, we wouldn't have such poverty. And so on.

On twitter this morning: A recent report from Singapore says that many people who have recovered from covid-19 have disturbingly low levels of antibodies. Attempts to figure out the true rate of infection suggests that countries are counting between 18% and 60% of them (and that can't include countries like Ecuador where there's virtually no testing while health care and even corpse disposal have broken down). Doctors in Boston argue that some patients are being put on ventilators too early, and that they actually do better with nasal cannula or bipap -- this virus doesn't behave like similar known conditions. The Washington Post has an article about the undercounting of deaths from coronavirus due to the unavailability of testing. ABC News reports that US intelligence officials warned in late November 2019 that a contagion was sweeping through China's Wuhan region.

NJ: 47,437 identified cases; 1,504 identified deaths.

Wednesday is the designated housework day, and that kept me busy for a couple of hours -- and tired me out enough that I took a nap after lunch. I had a board meeting for my tai chi school, did a couple of rounds with the Wednesday group, and broke for dinner. I took a short walk outside wearing my new mask, but it was a little chilly. I'm going to try taking walks without my glasses and see if that's any better than being so steamed up.

NYT: New research indicates that the coronavirus began to circulate in the New York area by mid-February, weeks before the first confirmed case, and that it was brought to the region mainly by travelers from Europe, not Asia.

Thursday, April 9

On twitter this morning: Social distancing has reduced  $R_e$  (the effective reproduction rate) from about 3.5 to just over 1 in many European countries and in King County, Washington during March.

Another quiet day. A little tai chi, exercise, a lot of news reading. A telemedicine call with my doctor so that she would approve my request for

a new prescription for lipitor. A little roblox with Evan. Chopped a bunch of vegetables, now roasting in the oven. And back to the news.

When I read about what's required to safely get people back to work, and contrast that with our incompetent federal government, the harder it is to picture the recovery process. They want to stop funding testing, the very cornerstone of recovery. It's really dreadful.

In many places in the world, including here in Jersey City, people come to their windows at 7 pm and cheer, clap, and bang pots and pans to cheer for health care workers. My sister-in-law told that in the Santa Cruz mountains, where she lives, there's another evening ritual: people step outside their houses at a set time (8 pm?) and howl like coyotes. The sound of coyotes is both mournful and wild, but I'm not sure what those humans sound like. Jan the sound travels a long way, so at a minimum, it's a way to reach out to one another from their separateness. (Writer of the future, find some residents of the Santa Cruz mountains and ask them!)

I was just looking at some plots of identified cases and deaths for each state, and thinking about how population density has to be an important factor in determining  $R_e$ ,  $R$  effective. And Henry and I realized again that we're glad that so many people left our building. Where they went, we do not know -- did they go to their home countries? Did they go to their country houses, or quickly rent houses in the country? No idea, but there's almost never anybody in the elevator with us and we almost never see children in the building.

Friday, April 10

I'd say I'm in a good place, but it doesn't take much to make me tear up.

A few hours later, I'm really feeling sad. Some is global: so much suffering, so much death, such a dysfunctional, incompetent, and cruel executive branch. Some is personal, as I grapple with what the recovery process is likely to look like for me. I'll probably be following the distancing protocol for the next two years, since I'm 68 now. It feels like becoming prematurely old, sidelined from life. I don't think I'll be stuck in this sorrowful place for long, but it's where I am today.

OK, finally took a shower and feeling better. Yes, it's weird to think that I might not see an eye doctor or a dentist for two years, or have a haircut, but I'll eat well, I'll exercise, I'll read. I'll learn, I'll be entertained. So just let it in and face up to it.

There's so much dreadful news -- apparently some covid survivors have lasting organ damage; the large number of people in NYC dying in their homes of cardiac arrest needs more investigation. Did they suspect they had covid but didn't dare go to a hospital? Did they have no idea how sick they were? Or weren't they even sick yet? The news reports are very sketchy.

Rachel Maddow focused on the catastrophe in nursing homes -- dying old people, sick and absent staff, no family visits allowed, no oversight.

Saturday, April 11

Starting with a 10:00 zoom with my tai chi school board and Anna, who has been helping us with marketing. We decided the other day that it was inevitable that our summer retreat would not take place this June, so this will be our final conversation. After that, a personal training zoom session.

58,151 positive tests in NJ. 2,183 identified covid deaths.

Brené Brown has a new podcast, just in time for the pandemic. The first episode was about the fear we feel when doing something for the first time, or facing a new situation which requires new things of us -- and then the shame we can feel because we're not good at it yet. That resonated with me. The episode I listened to yesterday included an interview with a collaborator of Elisabeth Kubler Ross. He talked about his personal losses and then they talked about the collective loss we're all experiencing together now. Since I started feeling so sad yesterday, that resonated with me as well.

Sunday, April 12

Stretched, exercised, then did part of an online qigong class. I stopped

early to help Henry figure out what went wrong with our grocery delivery -- which is still a mystery.

Spoke with Sheree on the phone, family zoom at 4.

Monday, April 13

I just heard that there's a movement going on to buy things from the USPS because our malignant executive branch refuses to give financial assistance to the struggling post office, despite its eagerness to help airlines, cruise ships, and the oil industry. So I bought \$1,650 worth of stamps. What the hell, there's an election coming up, and I might be sending out a lot of letters. Now I'd better get to work writing those letters.

Tai chi, exercise, made bean stew for dinner. Now on a zoom call with the Bellcore folks; I'll leave early for a zoom call with college friends.

I don't know if I recorded here what Henry and I have been learning about problems in the production and distribution of various staples. Toilet paper came up first. It's been scarce since the shutdown started, and it turns out that the commercial toilet paper is unlike domestic paper both in the quality of the paper and the size of the rolls, and it's even made by different companies, which have different factories and distribution chains. The next thing we learned about was food, where the same thing applies. Milk, for example, is packaged differently for schools than it is for domestic sales, and farmers are now pouring milk down the drain -- partly because of the school shutdown and partly because coffee shops are closed. And apparently people eat fewer vegetables when they're eating at home than they do when they eat out (which shocks the hell out of me), so farmers are plowing under all kinds of vegetables, like onions and greens. Supply chain, that's the term.

Tuesday, April 14

We went to the grocery store (Hudson Greene, on the first floor of our building) during the time slot reserved for older people and other vulnerable people. It wasn't too crowded; I only had to dodge workers stocking the shelves for the day.

I've been thinking that I'm glad this challenge is coming to me at this time of my life. I stopped drinking decades ago, and thank god for that. I don't have young children to manage. I have greater clarity in dealing with my emotions -- patience, self-compassion, more ability to spot shame and grief when they arise. And I'm very clear about the value of movement -- when I feel bad, I know to take a walk, climb some stairs, or do some other exercise. And I never forget that I have a lovely place to live, a good partner, and a steady income -- that all makes me hugely lucky.

A little yoga, a nice lunch, a walk with Henry. Back to twitter.

Proning -- this is my new covid word of the day. "Some patients, by taking oxygen and rolling onto their sides or on their bellies, have quickly returned to normal levels. The tactic is called proning. ... At Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx, Dr. Nicholas Caputo followed 50 patients who arrived with low oxygen levels between 69 and 85 percent (95 is normal). After five minutes of proning, they had improved to a mean of 94 percent. Over the next 24 hours, nearly three-quarters were able to avoid intubation; 13 needed ventilators. Proning does not seem to work as well in older patients, a number of doctors said." This is excellent news, and suggests that the need for ventilators is much less urgent than expected.

A workout with Ken at our new time, 4:30 in the afternoon; a little Roblox with Evan.

And this is the day that our failure of a president decided to cut off funding to WHO.

Maddow's reports this evening were very depressing -- unfolding disasters at eldercare facilities, VA hospitals, and even meat processing plants. And it seems clear that the federal government is not getting any better at distributing PPE or making testing available. I hope the new state alliances can help fill those gaps.

I learned last night just how terrible testing is in NJ. People line up the night before in order to get tested, waiting all night in their cars. They do this for various reasons -- some people have to brandish their test results in



order to get any sick pay; other people want to make intelligent decisions about their living arrangements. Other people, I presume, just want to know.

Wednesday, April 15

We cleaned the apartment this morning; I've got a sword class over zoom in about an hour. That'll be interesting! I'll use a collapsible travel sword which has not shown itself to have any value before now.

Trump, as we know, loves to generate media attention and doesn't care how he does it. A few days ago, he was claiming that governors have no power to re-open their states because the president has all the power (despite claiming several days before that that he takes no responsibility for anything related to our covid response); now he has backed down and says he'll authorize each governor to do what they choose. His new kerfuffle is freezing funding to WHO, because he is trying out another scapegoat for his government's poor performance. He has attacked all previous administrations (despite having disbanded and ignored all the preparations previous administrations had assembled), Democrats, governors; he even accused health care workers of walking out with PPE to explain the shortages. So. That's what we're working with.

I took a walk, talked on the phone with [my son] Jeremy, had dinner, re-watched several episodes of "The Good Place." My life is good, really. Then I had a look at twitter before going to bed, and oh my god what a painful reminder of how terrible this really is. 17 bodies were found at a sub-standard nursing home in NJ. "The 17 were among 68 recent deaths linked to the long-term care facility, Andover Subacute and Rehabilitation Center I and II, including two nurses, officials said. Of those who died, 26 people had tested positive for the virus. For the others, the cause of death is unknown." (New York Times) As Andy Slavitt put it: "Before I talk about the tools we need, I will talk about one other property of this that's most despicable— who it preys on. The weak, the sick, the old, the poor, those with less space. Who it spares: the gated communities, the healthy, the young. They're just spreaders."

I have noticed the similarity of living in our doorman building in Jersey City

and living in a gated community, so that hit home. The inequality in the US has never looked worse than it does now.

Thursday, April 16

In other news from yesterday, Trump had a phone meeting with a bunch of CEOs, who told him they wanted to see more testing before the economy was restarted. Not what he expected, I don't think.

Friday, April 17

I'm becoming increasingly aware of the contrast between the news and my life. My own life is so comfortable, and starting to work so well, that I experience a shock of recollection each time I come back to the news after a few hours away. I hardly have any real challenges any more, except that there are still a few glitches in the acquisition of groceries. The comfort of Henry's presence, supplemented by all the telephone and on-line contact, is keeping me from feeling lonely or isolated. In my birth family, the next generation is all accounted for and getting by. This, I'm well aware, is not the experience most Americans are having, let alone people across the planet.

I have small challenges that I'm embarrassed to mention, even here. And yet one of the purposes of the journal is to note those, so I shouldn't skip it. Let's see --

- hair care. I trimmed my bangs yesterday, and they look good, so I'm ok for a while.
- medical appointments. My doctor wanted to test my lipids, but that'll have to wait; my gynecologist sent email reminding me to make an appointment, and I just deleted it. I'm supposed to see the dentist in a month, and who knows?
- groceries: Henry and I are trying to minimize trips to the store, but Fresh Direct didn't show up last week.
- emotions. Despite my claims that everything's fine, it still doesn't take much to make me cry. Going through a global pandemic with a useless federal government is pretty unbearable.

On twitter this morning: Doctors are starting to do CT scans to deal with the unreliability of covid-19 testing. This parallels the experience the Chinese had in January, so it's another example of us having to rediscover things we should have learned months ago.

There are now three regional state alliances -- east, west, midwest. I don't think you can find a stronger signal of the failure of the federal government that states are now compelled to reinvent it.

My cousin R. just wrote to tell me that her brother S. has died. Their brother D. got a call from a police detective in Daytona Beach, FL, where he's been living for the past few months. It seems likely that his death was related to the alcoholism that he's struggled with for nearly 40 years. He was estranged from his siblings, who all live in North Carolina, so we don't know much about his circumstances. Betsy, Nancy, and I are Facebook friends of his, and I just posted something there to see if he has friends in Daytona Beach.

Saturday, April 18

JL reached out to me after seeing my posting on Facebook. I think he's S's cousin on the other side, so my second cousin. I remember him a bit from childhood, and I met him again at two family events in Asheville over the past several years. JL said that S's dad, my father's brother, used to scapegoat him, so he had a bad start. He must have been under ten when my uncle died, and people were already telling him that he was now the man of the house.

R said they would learn the cause of death after an autopsy, and I wonder if that will really happen, with every step of the medical system so overloaded.

Florida's stay-at-home order, a fairly weak one, was issued on April 1, which is the last date S posted on Facebook. We will probably never know if that's meaningful. Did his regular AA meeting close down? Did his weed supply dry up? We know nothing.

I just learned that they're howling at 8pm nightly in Colorado as well!

They're doing it in support of healthcare workers. I guess it's a western thing.

Sunday, April 19

I'm mourning S, and sharing what I learn with my family.

The covid news is scary, as always. Its effects are so variable. Ventilators are less of a concern now, but more patients need kidney dialysis than expected. Articles are beginning to emerge about what the next couple of years might be like. Maybe more on that later.

Evan tried to reach me a couple of times yesterday and the day before, and didn't connect, so I caught up with him this morning and we played for a while.

When I couldn't sleep last night, thinking about S, and wishing that I had reached out to him, I formed the intention of reaching out to people I think might be vulnerable. I sent email to my cousin Doug; sent a text to a young man I know in Jersey City who's newly sober; sent email to to a friend in Oregon who just sent us two great hand-made masks.

I spoke with Sheree, who has been sick for weeks. Her doctor now thinks she has covid, but she's not planning to get tested because it's such a hassle and because there's no specific treatment anyway. Her doctor is treating her worst symptoms, like her cough.

Monday, April 20

Someone responded today to my note on S's Facebook page. She was his friend when he lived in Asheville, but also hadn't been keeping in touch very well since he moved to Daytona Beach. He was helpful in caring for her mother, who had been close to Stephen's mother. It's good to have found another person who is mourning his death, and we'll be sure to include her if we have a zoom memorial service.

I ordered a folding screen to use as a background during zoom calls.

NJ has started to publish the numbers of covid cases and deaths in all facilities that care for the elderly. Henry and I looked up the CCRC where we plan to relocate one of these years, and they have 21 cases -- only one in the independent living section, according to Henry's friend who lives there, who added that there have been cases among the staff. It's hard to imagine what would be involved in moving during a pandemic, but we agreed that it would not be a bad place to be despite those numbers. It would be helpful to be there in case one of us actually came down with the virus. Of course we can only imagine ourselves living independently -- we would doubtless feel terrifyingly vulnerable if we were less healthy. That makes me realize how much I haven't been putting myself in the shoes of someone ten years older than us, or with more health problems. It's probably a bit too scary.

Tuesday, April 21

[ More about my cousin. ]

The state of our country is so dismaying. Some state governors (Georgia, Texas) are beginning to lift their stay-at-home orders while when the number of cases in their states continues to rise. How did this become a political issue rather than a public health issue? George Packer just published an article in The Atlantic describing the US as a failed state, and it's hard to see it any other way.

Wednesday, April 22

The news doesn't change as much now as it did in the beginning. The numbers keep going up. The daily counts in New York have started to drop; those in NJ are pretty flat. Other states are having more rapid increases, and some of them (the Trumpier ones) have not put shelter-in-place orders into effect. In other states with flat or climbing numbers, the governors are preparing to open things up, and they're not showing a lot of careful thought -- hair salons and tattoo parlors? Oh dear. Federal money is being distributed, but disgraceful amounts are going to rich cronies of the administration. Very little money is being distributed to the states, who are forced to bear enormous financial burdens. State unemployment services are still overloaded and slow; some people are desperate and angry.

At home, it's quiet. We cleaned house before lunch; I had a sword class at 2; I'll have a board meeting in another hour, at 5. I'm very sleepy today -- I stayed up too late, for no particular reason.

Thursday, April 23

It's evening now. It's been a quiet day, and I was feeling quite blue for most of the day, even spending some time in bed in the late morning, lying around, listening to a couple of podcasts, and reading the Grapevine, the little AA magazine. I didn't perk up until about 4, when I started getting ready for my exercise appointment at 4:30. I haven't had a walk for two days, so I <must> get out tomorrow. (Oh, rats -- it's supposed to rain all day.)

At around that same time, I learned from Sheree that Tina has been in the hospital since Sunday with pneumonia, but she doesn't have covid-19. What a scary time to be sick! And of course everyone in the hospital has to follow pandemic rules, so Ira couldn't even walk into the hospital with her. I sent email to Ira, asking whether I could do anything, and he said she's due home today. She was considering some pretty major surgery this year for her blood cancer, and I wonder if that's going to be possible for some time. There's so much collateral damage when something this infectious is around.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren's brother just died of covid; Sen. Maxine Waters' sister is in the hospital with covid.

I just won't even comment on what T\*\*\*\* says -- oh, but there is some black humor in his treatment of Governor Kemp of Georgia. T. egged on the right-wing demonstrations against state shutdowns, tweeting "Liberate Michigan!" and so forth, making Kemp think he would be a hero to re-open businesses in his state. Then T. announced in his daily so-called press conference that he didn't approve of what Kemp was doing, saying Georgia wasn't ready. No-one deserves to see the underside of a bus more than Kemp, though of course when I think it's funny, I'm forgetting about the Georgians who will die because of his bad judgement. They didn't <all> vote for him.

Friday, April 24

Last night I was thinking about the profound confusion I sometimes feel; I know Henry feels something like it as well. Part of it is probably the dissonance between the quiet of my own life and the urgency and grief in the hospitals, or the distress of people who don't know where their next meal is coming from. But it also reminds me of times I've experienced culture shock in countries where I don't know what's safe and I can't read the street signs. So many things have changed so suddenly that we occasionally don't know where we are any more.

I started the day with a 7 am AA meeting over zoom. I haven't attended meetings in years, but my cousin's death, and our current isolation, makes me want to start going again. And it's a lot easier to go if I don't have to leave the house!

A quiet day here. Set up my new phone, did a load of laundry.

Saturday, April 25

It's a beautiful clear day here, so I just took a nice long walk. I hadn't been outside for 3 days -- I wasted a couple of opportunities, and then it rained all day yesterday. It was lovely to be in the sun and air. The walkway along the Hudson gets a little crowded on a day like this, so I switched to city streets after a while.

Mayor Fulop has announced that a few city parks will open on Monday; they aren't parks I use, but I'm glad he's doing it. So much of Jersey City is crowded and unattractive; people are starved for space and greenery. Activities in the parks will still be limited in order to avoid infection, but just to be outside is a pleasure.

It's World Tai Chi Day, and I still have time to connect to a zoom session organized by Angie Holland, a teacher in our school who lives in Portland. ... And yet I didn't. What did I do? Hung around on the computer, followed twitter, did a few stretches in front of the news. Watched several episodes of "The Good Place" on Netflix.

I posted on facebook the way I described feeling yesterday -- that culture shock feeling. An interesting collection of responses:

[Christina Zable](#) My disorientation is more in the form of detachment. Thinking about what's going on is stressful so I stay in my bubble with my latest online pursuits, but the idea of grappling with it all is always hovering somewhere in the distance.

[Kim Howie](#) i know what you mean. There's the quiet routine in the house broken up by dog walks for us. Then there the reality of news stories of disrupted lives where people in rural areas eat once a day or people are thrown out by their roommate or all those people who can't get their unemployment checks. It's overwhelming how much misery that many people are experiencing in addition to Covid-19.

[Jeremy Mullen](#) It is a crazy time. Was just thinking today that we're training ourselves to fear the outside world and other people.

[Steve Shulman](#) It seems a "normal" process from having the predictability (even if only in our imaginations) of our lives jolted our of our usual patterns. "Living in interesting times"

[Mary Lock Albrecht](#) I forget the virus when home reading or gardening. Then I drive somewhere, to a park or landfill, and pass people with masks leaving the grocery and I am jolted back to this reality.

[Hollys Ender](#) Definitely having a time of it. We are so fortunate to be safe at home & able to sustain ourselves, but it is hard to find the joy in that when we know so many are suffering. There is some salvation in reaching out & donating to those in need, but we still feel inadequate.

[Denise Meyer](#) If you choose to not partake in the emotional drama it is not that you don't care. You can live a socially distanced and make responsible choices for the betterment of those around you. I have been imagining the narrative that will be in the history books. It helps to keep the hair in my head and reduces the profanity directed at the newspaper. Not watching tv news propanly [sic] makes this easier!



[Diane Wormser](#) My head is spinning with all the contradictory information, changes in recommendations. I have been working (in health care settings), not full time. I am grateful not to be sick. I am unsure if it is due to meticulously following the safety instructions of the day or dumb luck. And I share my life with my love, who works in the hospital. We muse that maybe we've already been infected. Who would know? Without universal testing, massive contact tracing and competent analysis of the data, we are all in the dark. And 45's nightly tirades give me more unease, seeing him flailing but thinking he's got a bead on all this with his "you know". I limit how much news I take in. Grab the essential facts and then turn it off.

[Linda Phillips](#) Yes. I only go out to shop every other week now. And each time I feel so afraid and unsure of the world. And more and more feel like this is a permanent change in how we all will function. And yes, there is a dissonance for me also financially because I still have my job and get my paycheck by working at home. So I am donating to everything under the sun because my privilege is just so much more glaring in this moment in time.

[David S. Fine](#) Totally! None of us really knows what is going on. It is so very very strange to say the least.

Sunday, April 26

Our grocery delivery arrived as expected -- hurray! My 11:00 qigong class was lovely. I'm feeling a lot of grief this morning -- at least I believe I am. The manifestation is tightness around my eyes and in my upper back. So maybe that actually says that I'm <not> feeling it, so it has to express itself in my body.

I posted two things to the omeka archive site -- a poster I spotted on the street in JC and a news video about the 8pm howling in Denver.

A friend in California just lost her mother -- not to covid. Misao was able to live in her mother's house in Madison, Wis, and to visit her mother every day in hospice. The pandemic put some limits on her -- she had to self-quarantine for her first two weeks in Madison before she could visit, but she

made it work. So many things keep going on despite covid. Parni's father had to spend a couple of days in the hospital, while she was unable to visit this very elderly man, mostly deaf and blind. Tina just got back from a few days in the hospital herself with complications of a long-standing blood cancer -- and her husband couldn't even walk in to the emergency room with her.

Monday, April 27

I went to the grocery store this morning -- the little one on the first floor of the building. That's the other place we buy groceries now, to supplement our Fresh Direct deliveries. They had nearly everything I was looking for -- everything but sodium-free Ezekiel bread and some unripe bananas.

The annual membership meeting of my tai chi school went well yesterday afternoon -- about a dozen people in a zoom meeting. I finished typing up the minutes this morning and sent them to the other board members.

And then it was car maintenance time. Our cars have been sitting in place for quite a while, and we decided it was time to attend to them. My car started right up, and we drove around for 45 minutes to keep everything moving. It was kind of exciting to be driving around after all this time. We didn't get to see any lovely scenery, but just seeing something different was kind of exciting. Henry's car battery is dead, so we brought the charger to the apartment and we'll try again tomorrow or the day after.

Covid symptoms are more mysterious than ever. Most of the people admitted to the hospital don't have a fever. Shortness of breath is far from universal. There are heart problems, strokes (which may explain the large number of people dying at home), blood clots, kidney problems, diarrhea.

No single treatment is emerging as all that helpful, either -- ventilators, remdesivir, chloroquine, serum transfusions. No magic bullet.

At 3:00, I joined a zoom session to write Get Out The Vote letters. I don't fully understand why that's so motivating, despite the distraction of the conversation, but it really works. I finished off 20 letters to unlikely voters in Texas. I got a call from a distressed friend partway through, but that didn't

stop me.

My friend's parents live in Florida. They're in their nineties, and her father is nearly bedbound. Her mother is at her wits' end and wants to come back to New York City, despite the risks. (Why didn't they come earlier? I don't know.) The family has a plan that involves at least two people to help with travel, but it doesn't look good now. So they're arranging to rent a private plane for about \$10K to get these two elderly people home, something they would not dream of doing under normal circumstances. Her mother was freaking out yesterday because the date hadn't been set, but it turns out that the travel arranger was waiting to see if he could get a better price. My friend had an outsized response -- anxiety and rage -- to her mother's fear and agitation, and I could feel her frantic energy over the phone as she tried to tame her feelings. Every emotional reaction is outsized these days.

Now I'm on a zoom call with Bellcore and formerly Bellcore people. There's one character who talks a lot and is pretty boring, but there's somebody from Colorado I haven't seen in a long time who's visiting. They just had a long, detailed conversation about where to shop, where the stores are located, what time to go, and oh my god, please.

Another mysterious shortage: there's a shortage of yeast for home baking, and one of the people on the call says that the company that makes it can't obtain enough of the little foil envelopes they would need. And we do know that home baking is on the increase.

Tuesday, April 28

And another supply chain issue: "American companies making crucial goods like ventilators, face masks and military equipment are [unable to get parts and materials they need](#) because the Mexican government has shuttered hundreds of factories during the pandemic."

Oh no, Trump just ordered all meat and egg processing plants to remain open. There is so much virus in these plants, and it seems to be so difficult to organize the production lines to keep people safe. This country has no patience.

A friend in Boulder, CO says: "With regards to howling. I think it lasted here about 1 day. I certainly don't hear anyone doing it anymore. Small correction. I live across the street from the Boulder Hospital. One of my upstairs neighbor's dogs is a firetruck reincarnated as a dog. So every time an ambulance drives up with its siren going, the dog howls. It has much better hearing than me, so the sequence is 1). dog howls 2). I hear the ambulance. That's our major source of howling."

The same friend says, "With regards to precautions. I still get a newspaper, but read it one day late. Same with physical mail. I don't disinfect it. With groceries, I let them sit for 3 days, except things that need to go in the fridge, and they get cloroxed." (I asked, because I'm curious to know what precautions people choose to take.)

It seems that most people I know are being more careful with their groceries than we are!

Someone just tried to send me a link in a private message on Facebook. The link doesn't work, but here's what it was supposed to be: "A friend describing in poetic style how walking around she thinks it's much like an earthquake but invisible. I liked it. I shared it myself." I like that a lot as another way to express how confused we all are.

Wednesday, April 29

Henry managed to get his car started today, so he's out driving around now. Wednesday is housecleaning day, so I'm washing the sheets and I just finished vacuuming and doing a few others things.

I'm starting to wear a hairband because my hair is getting so unruly.

Oh boy, Governor Murphy is going to reopen state parks on May 2nd. My father's birthday is always a good day to celebrate. [My father was born on May 2nd, and he died many years ago.]

Had a short zoom conference in order to learn how to co-host a tai chi class. Our Thursday night Fundamentals class starts tomorrow.

Sword class in 20 minutes.

This tweet by Justin Wolfers, professor of economics, U Mich: This is stunning: Nearly half of the Q1 decline in GDP can be attributed to healthcare, which is presumably delaying of elective procedures. It's a strange reality that in the midst of a pandemic, we have a healthcare-led recession.

And oh my god this tweet: Dr. Fauci on CNN says “everyone who needs a test” will “hopefully” be able to get one “towards the end of May, the beginning of June.” (Recall that Trump told reporters on March 6: "Anybody that wants a test can get a test. That’s what the bottom line is.”)

I had a kind of crummy day yesterday. But it is not new that I'm unhappy when I have a day or two with no commitments and I don't get anything accomplished. Today, on the other hand -- housecleaning, laundry, prep for tomorrow's class, sword class, then stretching. A very pleasant and satisfying day even though I didn't go outside or have a serious workout. I'm not very complicated, really!

I have not been immersing myself in the news the way I did at the beginning. It doesn't change very rapidly any more, so I don't feel anxious about missing some critical piece of news. I'm not a twitter "completist," to use a description my friend Polly once used. I don't have to read every single tweet; I can scroll right to the top and read until it starts to become repetitive, which happens fairly quickly, because everybody has to post their hot take on the same story and twitter isn't clever enough to collapse those into a thread of some sort.

I think the only medical news today is that remdesivir did well in a properly designed study. It didn't save lives, but it shorted the duration of the illness from 15 days to 11. And that's the best we can do at the moment.

Thursday, April 30

The Daily Show, of all programs, is doing a segment on supply chain issues. I hadn't heard beer mentioned before, but they showed a brewery discarding draft beer. That's quite a surprise. And can it be true that Belgium is asking its citizens to eat more French fries because otherwise

potatoes are going to waste? What? Aren't there better ways to eat potatoes? The world is very weird now.

We just watched the USS Comfort leave New York, moving down the Hudson at a pretty good clip. I noticed an unusual number of people standing at the end of the ferry pier and the McClatchy pier, and wondered what they might be doing there on this foul day, so gray and so windy. They were all looking upriver, so we did, too. First the number of small boats started to increase, and finally the Comfort hove into view. We had watched it arrive, with its escort of local police and Coast Guard boats, and I think the whole region was filled with relief and hope. I don't think it ever was as helpful as we hoped -- I just read that it treated 182 non-covid patients in its time in NYC -- but it's still a good sign that it is no longer needed.

Our senior community is up to 31 covid cases now; still no deaths.

A couple more donations: the food bank again, Planned Parenthood. I'll send another \$80 to our housecleaner once she confirms where I should send it. Henry's covering most of our household expenses, leaving me free to donate money hither and yon.

I've been regretting that impulsive purchase of so many stamps. I couldn't find it on any of my credit cards and thought maybe it hadn't gone through -- but alas, there it is on paypal. Oh well. I'd better write more letters. Like two thousand of them!

Friday, May 1

I'm reading an analysis of super-spreader events (SSEs) (<https://quillette.com/2020/04/23/covid-19-superspreader-events-in-28-countries-critical-patterns-and-lessons/>) by Jonathan Kay. He excludes congregating living facilities from his database because he's trying to determine the dominant mode of transmission, and all modes are doubtless included there. He includes cruise ships and military vessels, as well as meat-processing plants. He identified 54 SSEs, and says that most of them are religious gatherings, large and small; parties; funerals; business networking activities. Some include more than one, and indeed, the categories overlap,

it seems to me, because funerals are generally religious gatherings and some funerals look more like parties. Singing shows up a few times, and shouting, or at least close talking, quite often. There's even a day of recreational curling by a group of Canadian doctors.

He concludes, "When do COVID-19 SSEs happen? Based on the list I've assembled, the short answer is: Wherever and whenever people are up in each other's faces, laughing, shouting, cheering, sobbing, singing, greeting, and praying. You don't have to be a 19th-century German bacteriologist or MIT expert in mucosalivary ballistics to understand what this tells us about the most likely mode of transmission."

He notes the absence of quiet activities, despite crowding: "watching movies in a theater, being on a train or bus, attending theater, opera, or symphony."

A headline: "Nearly 900 workers at a Tyson Food plant in Indiana have reportedly tested positive for COVID-19. The coronavirus infected 890 of the 2,200 people at the plant located in Logansport, Ind., local station [WISH TV reported](#) Wednesday. "

It's gray and rainy here, and forecast shows an entire day of this.

Yet another tai chi class. I wasn't much in the mood for this one, my fourth of the week, but it was worthwhile.

Saturday, May 2

I'm watching last night's Rachel Maddow -- I listen to them in the morning because my sleep is too disturbed if I watch them at 9 pm when they air. Today she's maintaining her focus on nursing homes, jails and prisons, meat processing plants. The vast majority of deaths are occurring in nursing homes. Huge numbers of new cases are found -- over 900, even over 1000 -- when prison populations and meat plant workers are tested.

She's also trying to figure out why the CDC has been muzzled and restricted. They're not giving any briefings, and the instructions they're giving meat plants about safe practices suddenly became nothing more

than suggestions sometime after April 20th.

Watching Colbert interview Chuck Schumer, and Schumer said something about "this evil coronavirus." That's the second time I've noticed somebody calling the virus "evil," which is just silly.

I listened to a podcast yesterday (TWIV, This Week in Virology) where I heard that the reports of recurrent infection in South Korea were due to RNA virus fragments, not active infections. That was good to hear. Apparently the PCR tests can't distinguish between live virus and "dead" virus fragments that can persist for quite a while.

Another supply chain workaround: I just read a tweet that in Massachusetts, restaurants can sell groceries. Whether these are exactly the same foods that would have arrived in their restaurant, or whether they are tweaking their orders, I don't know, but they have different suppliers than grocery stores have. This must be how sam.a.m, a restaurant in my neighborhood, has been selling groceries from the day the shutdown began.

Henry and I had a walk this morning. It's a spectacularly lovely day. After lunch, I listened to a couple of podcasts -- Marc Maron interviewing a very entertaining film director; The Bugle. Now I'm getting a head start on the letters I'm going to prepare for Vote Forward at a 5:00 zoom session. .... That worked great. I pre-addressed the envelopes and was done in an hour. Some people suggested that we can use pre-printed return address stickers, so I just ordered a bunch on amazon.

Countries effectively containing COVID & keeping deaths low: South Korea, New Zealand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Czech Republic, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Singapore, Vietnam, Greece, China, Australia, even Germany to a certain extent. Nepal. Definitely not the US, UK, Spain, Italy, Russia, Brazil.

Sunday, May 3

It's shaping up to be a sociable sort of day. I talked with Sheree on the phone for a while after breakfast. She's finally over that long pneumonia. I don't know if she'll ever find out whether she had covid-19, but she's back



to life, working in her garden, walking around town, working. She's finally feeling less depressed and lonely, too.

11:00: qigong class

12:30: FaceTime with Evan -- an hour of Roblox, as it turned out

4:00: Zoom with my family in California, Alaska, Texas, Seattle.

Our FreshDirect order just came -- thank goodness it only failed to arrive once. It's always a joy to see the fruits and vegetables emerge from the bag. And there's always the question of what to wipe down, what to sequester, and what to just stick in the refrigerator. For the most part, we just stick everything in the refrigerator and wash our hands. I wiped down the counters, refrigerator and freezer handles, cabinet handles. Then we just hope we were careful enough.

The family phone call was especially nice, somehow. We talked about our cousin. I passed along everything I've learned. Betsy told a funny, scary story about going canoe surfing with our uncle and his brother-in-law when she was 13 or 14. She was told to lie on the bottom of the canoe, which meant that she was trapped under it when they spilled. She remembers thinking that she wasn't going to make it, but managing to pull herself out. Wow.

A few interesting developments about our accommodations to covid-19 came up on the call as well. My niece Julia, an audiologist, said that her office in Anchorage, AK, is about to open up. They'll have fewer staff on the premises -- people who can work from home, like the woman who handles their billing, will do so. They'll wear face shields at all times, and masks when wearing them won't excessively limit their hearing-impaired patients from being able to understand them.

My sister Nancy has been going in to her office (at Abbott, in Silicon Valley) a couple of days a week all along. She says she needs to sometimes for access to a better computing setup and a high-speed printer, and because she sometimes needs to hand things to her boss. And she feels that it's reasonably safe, because fewer people are in the office so they can maintain a safe distance, and the cleaning staff is attentive about cleaning surfaces.

Both of these cases tell us something about how businesses are going to be able to cautiously re-open in the coming months.

On the lighter side, my brother Rick and his wife Jan are giving each other haircuts. They didn't look too bad -- a bit amateurish, but definitely not shaggy like Henry and me.

Rick told us that the Alzheimer's research project he signed up for had been cancelled, because the drug under investigation turned out to do more harm than good. He enrolled in a new study, but it has been delayed because of the pandemic. He had his psychological evaluation, but not the spinal tap or pet scan. (Wow, serious study.)

Monday, May 4

Henry and I took a walk in the neighborhood this morning. Peninsula Park was open -- I think that's what it's called. It's the little spur of Liberty State Park on the north side of the marina, and it opened when LSP did, this past Saturday. It was a spectacularly beautiful morning and lovely to be outside.

I just attended another AA meeting over zoom. This was one of the regular Barrow Street lunchtime meetings, so I could picture the usual space as we talked. I haven't been a regular meeting attender for the past several years, but my cousin's death has me missing AA. One of the attendees commented on how quickly all the local AA meetings managed to get online meetings going when social distancing started, and that's the same thing I have observed about my tai chi school.

Good news about voting rights: Democratic Party-controlled counties in Republican-controlled states (Wisconsin, Texas) are approving vote by mail and deciding to fund it. That will force the Republican-controlled counties, and indeed the state legislatures, to go along. And a court in Oklahoma ruled against their custom of requiring that all mail-in ballots have to be notarized.

Bad news: The police in Daytona Beach reported that S was surrounded by bottles of alcohol, which supports that theory of his death. And his sister

tells me that another sister's son recently OD'd on opiates and was revived with a shot of narcan. [He later did die of his addiction, either in late 2022 or early 2023.]

Many states are experiencing large anti-social-distancing demonstrations. They're just so disturbing and mad. People crowd together and shout in the faces of the police, doubtless spreading infection, while they call it a hoax intended to bring down Trump, or harangue about how horrible vaccines are. In some states they carry guns. And it's the usual racist MAGA crowd, waving confederate flags or anti-Semitic symbols.

[Congressman] Ted Lieu describes them as a cult, and that's about right. I have to remind myself that polls show large public support for social distancing measures, so this is a noisy, deluded minority, even loonier than Trump himself.

To cheer myself up after looking at the terrible state of our country, with or without covid-19, I opened a box that arrived today, bringing me two sets of dumbbells I can use while I have no access to a gym. And I did a little bit of tai chi to bring me back to myself. Now I will listen to a silly podcast and go to bed.

Tuesday, May 5

I had a hard time going to sleep, feeling so sad. I went to a 7am AA meeting this morning, and it helped to talk about my cousin with people who understand the situation so deeply. I think this is normally a Hoboken meeting.

I'm working on an obituary for my cousin. I've never written one of those.

The other day on York Street, I saw a woman in a face mask hand something to another woman in a face mask. It was a baggie about a quarter full of a white substance. I'm betting it was <gasp> sourdough starter.

I'm noticing more instances in the news lately, and on Twitter, where people publish or speak too quickly and get things wrong. Was covid in

Paris on December 2 or December 27? Have any meaningful mutations occurred already? Hold on, people, and take a breath. You don't have to be the first to say something.

Took a walk; had a zoom call with Jim, with Henry chiming in. Now getting ready for my workout with Ken.

Wednesday, May 6

The news is just disgusting, so I'm consuming less of it, finally. The federal government has completely abandoned us, and people with bad state government are really on their own to make good decisions -- which is terrible news for most Americans, who don't have the resources to protect themselves or remain sheltered in place.

Wednesday is our housecleaning day, as ever, so we nearly wore ourselves out by lunchtime! My sword class after lunch was good. And then I did nothing the rest of the day -- listened to a few podcasts, ate dinner, watched Hari Kondabolu do standup comedy on Netflix, watched an episode of 'The Good Place.' Exchanged email with a friend in Spokane.

Thursday, May 7

I lay in bed last night trying to figure out exactly why I was feeling so rotten. I noted the plain but ignoble fact that when the suffering of the world really feels terrible, there's usually some personal suffering behind it. My back is hurting but I'm loath to go to the chiropractor -- and somehow that simple fact made me feel like crying. I guess it's a stand-in for all the things I can't do, or fear I won't be able to do. So I decided I would take the chance -- I wrote to the chiropractor last night to find out his schedule.

I also called my dentist. I have an appointment next Friday, but it's hard to believe it's a good idea to go. I left a message, and we'll see. I already cancelled my annual eye exam last month.

The news was good and bad. There's an article in The Atlantic reporting that high percentages of Americans are clear about the need to continue using some social distancing practices despite whatever their governors

are saying. On the other hand, there's an article in the NYT saying that a survey of recent hospital admissions in NY says that new hospitalizations are dominated by retired and unemployed people, people who do not use public transportation. Three quarters are older than 50, because most young peoples' illnesses can be handled at home. What it doesn't say is how they became infected. Are they in crowded living quarters? Do they have to go to crowded stores or food banks?

The dental appointment is definitely cancelled.

Henry and I went to Liberty State Park after lunch. It's the first time we've been there since before social distancing began. There were a lot of cars in the parking lot by the park office, but people were spread out. There were people on bicycles, a couple with music blaring out of bluetooth speakers, people walking, families with kids. I saw an excited and nervous kid learning to ride a bicycle, with his dad still hanging on to the seat. We saw a couple of yellow warblers by the little pond, and watched a red-wing blackbird for a while. There were barn swallows over the Hudson and tree swallows by the pond. What a perfectly lovely afternoon. (While I'm writing about birds, I'll note that I saw a common yellowthroat along the Morris Canal two days ago -- what a lovely little bird, with its black mask and yellow breast.)

I left the lights on in the car, so it wouldn't start at first. Uh-oh. But Henry carries the charger with him and the car started right up. We drove around for a while -- out on 78, back over the Pulaski, which we hadn't really looked at since it was under construction for a couple of years.

I was back in time for my workout session with Ken.

And I'm going to the chiropractor tomorrow. Since he always tells me to take it easy for a few days after a big adjustment, Friday is perfect. I'll miss a tai chi class, but there seem to be plenty of those.

And Barr dropped charges against Flynn. What a disgrace.

Good news from the Washington post: [Blood thinners show promise for boosting the survival chances of the sickest covid-19 patients](#) -- A study of

hospitalized patients showed that 29 percent of patients on ventilators who received anticoagulants died, compared with 63 percent who did not receive the treatment.

In other covid news, a few children are falling ill in New York and New Jersey, some seriously ill, with a mysterious inflammatory syndrome. I'm not even sure if it's been established that this is a form of covid, but it would be an odd coincidence if it isn't. If it is, it's odd that it's taken this long to show up.

Good news in the NYT: A new study offers a glimmer of hope in the fight against the coronavirus: Nearly everyone who has had the disease — regardless of age, sex or severity of illness — eventually makes antibodies.

I helped to teach a tai chi class this evening (Fundamentals). I was a little more comfortable chiming in than I was last week, so that's good. I'm such an unconfident teacher that I was pleasantly surprised.

The senior community where Henry and I are on the waiting list now appears on the NJ list with 38 covid cases and one death. I googled around to see how many assisted living beds they have, and it seems to be 40 or 50.

Friday, May 8

I slept until 9 this morning! I love it when I sleep late, and I'm always sure I need the extra hours.

I'm watching Rachel Maddow as I do my morning stretching. I do wish she would ease up on the outrage and sarcasm, but she's an awfully good source of information.

I went to the chiropractor after lunch. It was unnerving, because he didn't wear a mask and he talks a lot, but I think he found and fixed the painful place on my upper back that's been bothering me for about 2 months. He also wanted to rant a bit about outsider theories of viruses, but I fended him off as best I could.

He and my trainer Ken seem to have a similar way of thinking -- if we live right and take care of ourselves, keeping our immune systems in good shape, then we don't have to worry about covid. There's obviously a lot of truth in that, but it bothers me for a couple of reasons. It reminds me of the kind of thinking that puts the blame on victims for becoming ill (or raped, or hit by a car), and it also feels as though they're creating an amulet out of thin air that will protect them from becoming ill. I know that kind of thinking because I can see it in myself when I do it.

And then they're attracted to the outsider scientists -- or non-scientists -- Ken more than Anthony, because Anthony has some medical background. Not for me, thanks -- I'll stick with the mainstream virologists and immunologists and public health experts for now.

I got email from my cousin about her brother: "We just received the coroner's report on S, no tox screen, but cause of death was chronic alcoholism. Actual cause was gastrointestinal bleeding. He also had advanced cirrhosis. It is apparent that he was deceased for some time before he was found. So, so sad." There was only about a month between the last contact we know of with a friend in Daytona Beach, a long cheerful phone call on March 24th, and his death. Can you get advanced cirrhosis in a month? Was he drinking all along, or was his liver already damaged from previous periods of active alcoholism?

My face is tense and twitchy, and I need to be quiet for a while and see what wants to express itself.

But first, there's a lot of covid in the White House this week -- first one of Trump's valets, then a press person, the wife of Stephen Miller. And, according to a few sources, there are several cases among the secret service. (Funny, I can only find it on odd sites, like yahoo or aol.)

Saturday, May 9

I was up at about 7. Had breakfast, watched Rachel [Maddow], addressed the 20 envelopes for the letters I'm going to work on at this afternoon's letter-writing meeting.

Polly sent me the zoom meeting number of her regular AA meeting in Seattle, and I'm logged in there now. There was a speaker, and he talked a lot about God. I tensed up a bit, and then I observed myself tensing up and wondered why. I think it's a reflection of my intolerance for disagreement, for other points of view. Looking at that seems like a good project. I think it's my anxiety about being wrong that makes me tense up that way. How unnecessary! I'm grateful that my self-observation has improved so much that I can keep noticing new things.

Ivanka Trump's personal assistant tested positive for covid. Are these people all careless?

I got email back yesterday from a covid study I had volunteered to participate in. They asked me for a few bits of demographic data and they'll let me know if they need me.

[ Deleting more about my cousin. ]

Just finished my letter-writing. I don't know how people can write letters and talk the entire time, but it's comfortable chatter and keeps me going.

Headline on twitter attributed to channel3000.com: 72 people have tested positive for the coronavirus after attending an anti-stay at home rally on April 24th in Wisconsin.

Sunday, May 10

Last night, I heard an interview with Anne Case, one of the authors of the work on "deaths of despair," the growing death rate by suicide and substance abuse among non-college-educated white Americans. I realized that my cousin's death is a perfect example.

Dr. Case made the point that deaths of despair might outnumber deaths from covid -- did she say we're losing about 150K people a year? More? The fallout from the shutdown is going to be really dreadful. The anti-shutdown people aren't entirely wrong, but they certainly aren't making their case very well, parading around with assault weapons and yelling about haircuts and rights.



I've been keeping away from the endless counts of cases and deaths, but let me have a look. And even though I know that poorer countries are going to have a worse problem than we do, I have been focused on my own country and my own experience.

covidtracking.com reports 1,301,095 positive cases and 73,291 confirmed deaths

NJ: 137,085 lab-confirmed cases, 9,116 lab-confirmed deaths (it's interesting that they're adding that qualifier to the deaths. How many excess deaths? According to nj.com, add another 20% or so.) More than half the confirmed deaths have been in nursing homes.

Hudson County: 16,675 positive tests, 954 deaths (presumably with the same qualifier)

Our prospective senior community is up to 40 cases and 3 deaths.

Well, no more numbers. I'm not into it. The news is full of people in the White House testing positive and the inconsistent reactions of other people in the White House.

Laurie Garrett just tweeted: The [@WhiteHouse](#) is skewing [#COVID19](#) related resources and funds on a per capita basis to 8 election swing states. NYS, the epicenter, has received less per capita aid than swing states OH, FL, WI, MN, PA -- even less than Alaska. This is pure politics, ugly.

Had a long walk outdoors, talked with Sheree on the phone, then Jeremy, who called to wish me Happy Mothers Day. Watched some TV -- SNL at home, and Midsomer Murders -- and now to bed.

Monday, May 11

Listening to the TWiV (This Week in Virology) podcast. Daniel Griffin (NYC doctor and medical professor) is reporting that treatments are settling down -- there aren't so many random things being tried; with the inflammatory

problems children are having, there's speculation that some unidentified coronavirus has been behind these cases for years; he notes that giving blood plasma during the clotting phase of the disease is a problem because it includes clotting factors when doctors are trying to thin the blood.

The next guest is a professor of dentistry, and what an interesting discussion about how dentists need to change their practices to keep everyone safe -- frequent changes of PPE, wearing face shields, screening patients, having patients gargle repeatedly with a hydrogen peroxide solution, engineering their air flow, frequent testing of staff.

I just cancelled my workout sessions for this week, because my chiropractor's advice is to avoid anything that makes my upper back overwork -- no planks, no heavy weights, standing exercises only. It looks like a good week for taking long walks. I can do step-ups on the coffee table using light weights, too, and lunges and glute exercises.

Henry and I were due to join old friends and family at White Pine Camp in the Adirondacks this June, but everybody is agreeing that it doesn't seem wise this year. Two people would have to fly in from Minneapolis; others in NJ fear being carriers to upstate New York; we all have concerns about being safe when vacationing together, or how sad it would be to be together without being able to be together!

Just had lunch and attended a Barrow St AA meeting. It was a step meeting, and they were addressing step 4, which gave me a chance to talk about the thing I noticed the other day, tensing up when I had a difference with someone.

Henry and I took a walk along the river after lunch. It was nicely uncrowded, I suppose because it was cloudy and a bit chilly. Still, it was very pleasant and Henry walked farther than he has before, all the way to the -- what's it called? the spinny bit that drives a boat. Sheesh. The screw? The propellor?

Tuesday, May 12

I picked up a few things at the store downstairs (Hudson-Greene) during

the senior shopping hour this morning, then watched most of Rachel Maddow from last night. I stopped to attend a meeting of the Seattle AA group Polly hooked me up with. The speaker was someone who has a hard time staying sober, and she talked about feeling like a fraud. The comments were all wonderful, and make me notice how strange we are to give so much power to our negative feelings. "Feelings aren't facts" is a useful saying that's common in AA; "do you believe your stories?" is a question posed by [writer and buddhist teacher] Jack Kornfield.

Yesterday, the salesperson we speak to at the senior community called. She said a couple of interesting things -- the numbers I've been recording here show a mix of staff and residents, and actually, most of the infections have been among staff members. It would definitely be good if the state report made that distinction. And she said that three move-ins to the independent living facility will take place in June, and they have worked out procedures to make that safe.

There's a hearing going on at the Supreme Court today to determine whether Trump can shield his tax returns from congressional committees and state prosecutors. This could be very consequential. Note that these documents wouldn't have to come from Trump himself, but from Deutsche Bank (and the IRS? -- not sure).

Fauci is testifying today in the Senate. He said that there have surely been more than the 80,000 deaths reported; he's also cautioning that moving too quickly to approve an untested vaccine has risks, like a vaccine that makes symptoms worse. Several witnesses and the committee chair are self-quarantining because they've been in contact with people who have recently tested positive for covid-19.

Rachel is discussing the fact that regular testing is not yet occurring at care homes.

My upper back still hurts, and there apparently seems to be some debate among physical therapists and others about whether ribs can actually become dislocated, or whether these are soft tissue injuries. If we weren't in a pandemic, I might seek other medical advice.

I took a nice long walk, and started by picking up a small bag full of trash along the sidewalk -- with gloves on. I decided one bag was enough, and enjoyed the rest of my walk with no chores to do. I walked to Van Vorst Park, and then over to Hamilton Square, and back along Newark Avenue and Grove St.

[ Deleting increasingly personal information about my cousins. ]

Wednesday, May 13

[ More deletions about my cousins. ]

Housecleaning day today -- we started early and were done in plenty of time for me to watch Rachel before lunch, somewhat distractedly. There was a discussion about the Supreme Court hearing yesterday. I haven't heard anything much yet about yesterday's elections -- it takes longer to count the votes when people vote by mail.

I've got a sword class in half an hour, so I'd better get warmed up. ....  
Lovely class. After it was over, Henry and I took a walk along the Hudson, then I had to come back and start chopping vegetables for a bean stew.

After dinner, I just visited another AA meeting -- a women's meeting that usually takes place in Hoboken.

Thursday, May 14

In the last couple of days, I've listened to a lot of podcasts, including Brene Brown in conversation with Harriet Lerner about what makes a good apology. They're just so wise and humane.

Now attending the Seattle AA meeting. The speaker read a couple of paragraphs from the Big Book, the first of which described how much damage and harm we caused around us in our alcoholism, and how we're now like people who have escaped a great disaster. I can look at the wreckage of my cousin's life, and I can remember the harm I caused. She also talked about how many people in her circle are "going deep" during the lockdown. I'm certainly in a different frame of mind, though I'm not yet

able to describe the differences.

In one way, this is an easier time for me, because I don't have to spend time in the presence of other people, which is so often a source of tension for me. It makes me sad to say that. But it's also true that other people are a source of joy, and I miss them. It's a strange and complicated time.

Small piece of good legal news: "4th Circuit Court of Appeals, en banc, rules that emoluments clause lawsuit against Trump can proceed." Actually, there have been several of those recently, and the legal system blocks some of the worst GOP behavior.

I'm just listening to a piece on the Daily Show about the difficulties the shutdowns are causing for the illegal drug trade. The first reason is that it's tough for dealers to move around make handoffs -- which is exactly the same challenge faced by spies in the current environment, as I heard on a Lawfare podcast yesterday. The second reason is (oh boy) supply chain issues! Coca processors are having a hard time getting chemicals from China. They're also having trouble laundering their cash.

The day has gone by incredibly quickly! Henry and I replaced a tricky bulb in a fluorescent fixture from his bathroom and then took a walk along the river. Dinnertime. Tai chi class in an hour.

Friday, May 15

My brother and sister-in-law were talking about intermittent fasting the other day, and my friend Meret brought it up a couple of weeks ago. I did a little reading, and it seems that it's healthy to limit the number of hours per day that we're eating. I'm trying to make minor modifications to my eating patterns -- to start a little later in the day, like 9 am, and to be sure I'm finished by 7 pm. That gets me down to 10 hours a day, which is a moderate approach. Rick and Jan are mostly interested in it because it is purported to reduce our chances of getting Alzheimer's. I'm starting to gain weight, and maybe that'll help me put a cap on it.

I had a 1:00 tai chi class today, and after that, Henry and I drove to Liberty State Park to walk around. It was nearly 80 degrees out! A very summery

afternoon. I'm so glad the park is open, because there were kids everywhere letting off steam -- on bicycles and scooters, doing cartwheels, screaming and yelling for the sheer joy of making noise where nobody would ask them to keep it down.

I set up 80 envelopes for tomorrow's Get Out the Vote letter-writing event, and scheduled the next family zoom for this Sunday.

The number of reported covid-19 deaths is now 87,385. The number of excess deaths is already over 100,000. Most states are reopening, though many of them have increasing cases even as they make that decision. It's going to be a rocky summer -- the number of cases and deaths probably depend on whether people continue to practice distancing even as they are no longer required to. Testing is still very uneven, and PPE is still hard to come by.

Henry and I have no plans to relax our caution.

Saturday, May 16

Today's schedule: letter-writing event at 2; live Bugle podcast at 3:30. Anything else? Trying to get some exercise.

Did some exercise in the apartment, trying to go easy on my upper back as instructed by the chiropractor. Took a walk before dinner. A very pleasant day.

Sunday, May 17

Today's schedule: Fresh Direct delivery in the morning; qigong at 11; family zoom at 4.

I'm pleased to note that my upper back felt a little better this morning when I lay down on the exercise mat on the floor. Maybe the week off was a good idea, maybe the adjustment helped. I'm hoping it does heal, because I don't want to go back to the chiropractor -- I was uneasy with his version of protection against the virus. He talks a lot and doesn't wear a mask; I'm not sure I saw him carefully sanitize the table before the people after me

went in to the room.

There's a wild story in the papers about an unemployment insurance scam run out of Nigeria.

I submitted another image to the archive covid19.omeka.net, a photo of a poster I saw on a telephone pole when I walked from Van Vorst Park to Hamilton Square a few days ago.

The 11:00 qigong class was nixed by zoom problems, so I signed up for the noon class -- but shortly after that class started, Jeremy called, and I didn't want to miss talking with him. He said things are still good at their house, except for how hard it is to get Evan to do his schoolwork. The sad news was that his father was recently diagnosed with ALS, and he's in bad shape. He may not live a lot longer. John has told his daughter Erin, a nurse, that he doesn't want to be intubated, and his breathing has already become difficult.

We had our family zoom at 4, and it was very nice. [My niece] Julia is an audiologist living in Anchorage. She's been working for 2 weeks, wearing masks and goggles (face shields have been ordered), and without support staff. They're allowing more time for each appointment, plus time between appointments to sanitize everything. The support staff is due to come back to work tomorrow, and she says she has a newfound appreciation for the work they do.

Monday, May 18

It's 3 am and I'm restless. I went to sleep at about 11, but woke up to pee and maybe I'll be up for a little while. .... That wasn't too long. After fooling around on the computer for a little while, I listened to an Audio Dharma podcast to settle my brain and slept until 8.

I "went to" the Seattle AA meeting, and then turned to podcasts, seeing that Lynn Shelton had died suddenly over the weekend. I listened to Marc Maron describe their relationship and express his grief, and cried along with him.

Now listening to TWiV. Dr. Daniel Griffin is giving his clinical update.

It was a slow day -- a lot of podcasts, a light workout, a short walk. I attended a strange zoom session at 6 organized by a friend of mine who's trying to organize people to do things (in this case, to submit comments on an FCC site in favor of net neutrality) while creating their own musical satire and having people play games. It was good to see Jim, but I'm not sure about their project.

Tuesday, May 19

Wow, the wind is roaring today, and it's from the north. I know this because I overlook the Hudson River and there's a wind sock at the end of the ferry pier. I imagine it's there because of the helipad, even though there are no helicopters landing there any more because so many people objected to their noise. I enjoyed them -- our apartment is high enough that the noise wasn't bothersome, and I loved to watch the them take off and land. The wind of the rotors made the water ruffle and feather in lovely ways.

Our building, 77 Hudson St, is not square, but angled, and it points to the east. The units in the pointy bit, like ours, are sometimes referred to as stingray units because of their shape, and in those apartments, at least, there's quite a high-pitched howl on windy days. We call it the ghost.

Yesterday, Trump claimed that he's been taking a prophylactic dose of hydroxychloroquine, which he spent a week or two touting as a miracle cure for covid-19, but which later turned out to be harmful to most patients. As someone just said on twitter, "Trump is crazy enough to take an unproven drug, dumb enough to say so, and dishonest enough to lie about it." I don't know who @WindsorMann is, but he summed up the situation perfectly.

SARS-CoV-2 -- Huh, I don't think I ever wrote the name of the virus instead of the name of the illness, so I had to look it up. Anyway, it's beginning to tear through South America, with numbers rising in many countries -- especially Brazil, because Bolsonaro has been even worse than Trump, a willful covid denier.



There's an article in the Washington Post today about how the design of public bathrooms is making customers uneasy -- urinals too close together, faucets and soap dispensers that need to be touched, hand dryers that blow droplets all over the room, lidless toilets with powerful flushes that may do the same thing. "Maybe the multi-stall restroom is obsolete," said Michelle Kempen, an interior designer at Kahler Slater, an architecture firm in Milwaukee. "With covid, we're moving toward a more European model, where the WC is a single room and then you go out into a shared sink area, along with touchless design and maybe a return to restroom attendants."

But what a burdensome expense for small establishments!

Trump is ramping up his attacks on the WHO as part of his program of blaming others for his own failures to respond to the pandemic -- China, the WHO, governors, Democrats. There's plenty of blame to go around, of course, but he deserves a lot of it.

I just looked at the date and was ambushed by a wave of sadness. When I take this one day at a time, I can be perfectly contented. When I think about how long it's been and how very much longer it's going to last, I grieve, and I resent the people who are boldly ignoring the virus and moving around in the world.

I wonder what I miss the most. I certainly miss hanging out with my grandson Evan. I miss driving around where I used to live and work -- Summit, Madison, Chatham. I miss going to Loantaka Park. I miss taking walks in Summit, as I did when I lived there. It's a great town for walking, with so many big old trees and beautiful houses. I miss meeting friends in cafes and restaurants, and eating out with Henry. I miss walking through Soho on my way to tai chi class on Sunday mornings -- not that I've been able to do that since the PATH was shut down on weekends. Do I miss tai chi classes? I miss the camaraderie. That was probably where I socialized the most. I miss my conversations with my son Jeremy when I'm visiting Evan. I'm glad Jeremy has started calling me on weekends. I'm sorry we had to cancel our annual trip to White Pine Camp in the Adirondacks. I'll miss kayaking on Ogden Pond.

Last night, though, I felt very peaceful as I went to bed, and I felt as though

something was falling away -- social anxiety, I think. I've always regretted how much I care about pleasing or impressing other people, and that burden felt lighter last night. Maybe I'll emerge from all this social isolation with more self-trust and less worry about other people's opinions. Wouldn't that be wonderful!

I went out for a walk before lunch, and saw something remarkable. On Essex St, in the little yards in front of some brick townhouses, there was a beautiful little skunk digging around! I can't imagine how it manages in such an urban neighborhood, but it was fun to watch and photograph it for a while.

At 12:30, I visited a new Hoboken AA meeting and enjoyed it very much. One old guy had some trouble with zoom, did something I'd heard about and not seen -- all the while he was talking, we had a great view of his nose, and only his nose.

I'm back to my workout sessions, just being careful not to do the things that might aggravate that problem in my upper back.

Henry and I attended an open meeting of our condo board this evening -- over zoom, of course. The attendance was much larger than they usually get. Lots of people had questions about what's happening next, and there aren't a lot of answers. They'll probably open the common areas once the governor changes the rules for the state, and who knows what the new rules will be? Since Henry and I don't use the pool or the barbecue area, this isn't urgent for us. And as older people, I expect we'll be operating under tighter rules anyway.

Wednesday, May 20

The number of confirmed deaths from covid-19 has passed 90,000. The presumed number, based on excess deaths, is probably closer to 120,000.

I woke up at 6 this morning. Today's plan: clean house before lunch, sword class at 2, board meeting at 4, Hoboken women's AA meeting at 7:30.

Whew, housecleaning done. Lunchtime.

To my surprise, I did everything on the plan, and even took a short walk outdoors. Not much to say today.

Thursday, May 21

Today's plan: Nothing on the schedule until 4:30 exercise, 7:30 tai chi. Plenty of time to make the Seattle AA meeting at 10.

The morning's news includes an article in the Atlantic asserting that the CDC and several states are reporting both PCR tests and antibody tests as a single combined number, which is utterly meaningless and confusing. There's a shooter with an AR-15 at a mall in Arizona. A reopened Ford plant had to shut down because of covid cases.

And yesterday, Trump said, "And, when you say per capita, there's many per capitas. It's like per capita relative to what?"

Several animal species can catch SARS-COV2 -- cats, tigers, minks, hamsters.

Oh my god, Trump again: ""I tested very positively in another sense, so, this morning, yeah. I tested positively toward negative, right? So, no. I tested perfectly this morning, meaning I tested negative. But that's a way of saying it. Positively toward the negative." It's a very bad time to have such a selfish moron in charge.

Henry and I just got back from a walk along the water. What a lot of perfect spring days we've been having!

Friday, May 22

I woke up dreaming about a large bird trapped at the bottom of a hole. It was bigger than any real living bird, and it was angry, striking at the edges of the hole with its huge beak. People were standing around gawking at it. It seemed impossible to help. So what is that bird? The people who feel trapped in their homes? I don't know. I don't feel particularly angry myself.

The Chinese government has decided to take a direct hand in Hong Kong's affairs, taking away their limited autonomy. I'm sure they know the world will have a hard time paying attention during the pandemic.

I think there are believed to be at least 5 million cases of covid-19 worldwide; at least 1.5 million in the US alone; about 95,000 confirmed deaths in the US.

I took a walk to deposit a couple of checks at the Chase ATM (I used a glove, and that made interacting with the ATM feel safe.), and then extended my walk with a few turns around Van Vorst Park. It isn't open yet, but there are flowers, beautiful and aromatic, in and near the park.

Now I'm at the end of a 1:00 tai chi class. I'm not fully present for this 1:00 class, but I hope I'm getting something out of it anyway.

I trimmed my bangs and gave Henry his first pandemic haircut. Luckily he doesn't have a lot of hair. I don't think it was a particularly good haircut, but it looks better than it did. My bangs don't look wonderful, either, but they'll do.

I'm attending a 6:45 meeting (East Village Agnostics). It's good -- nobody's belaboring their beliefs, it's just a regular AA meeting without a lot of God references.

Saturday, May 23

There's nothing on my schedule today except a Get-Out-The-Vote letter-writing session at 2:00 with the Upper West Side group.

I watched last night's Rachel Maddow program, with reports on the eagerness of the federal government and various state governments to force things to reopen and the disease outbreaks that result -- churches, meatpacking plants, and, as it turns out, many other workplaces. The feds are doing a terrible job of requiring employers to make their workplaces safe. She reported on a new JAMA article arguing that testing everybody for the virus is meaningful and useful; symptom screening, like taking everybody's temperature, is not. That sort of thing is being referred to as

security theater, or health security theater, or hygiene theater.

I just attended a 10:00 women's meeting, and learned that it usually meets at Barrow Mansion -- I'm going to join this one.

It's been another quiet day. I did a light workout in the apartment -- the rainy weather deterred me, but Henry still got in a good walk by going in circles on the 11th floor deck. I was late for my letter-writing session, and then my zoom link didn't work, so I just sat by myself and wrote my 20 letters. I have another session tomorrow.

I've been reading some Agatha Christie novels on the library's app; very light entertainment.

Polly told me that she and Linda had volunteered to do contact tracing for the state of Washington, so I checked and saw that NJ was also looking for volunteer contact tracers, and I registered.

Sunday, May 24

Schedule: qi gong at 11, GOTV letter-writing at 4.

And in between those two, I took a walk -- I picked up a bag of trash, walking through Peninsula Park and over to Van Vorst.

There's still so much we don't know about SARS-COV2, but this report from Singapore is encouraging, and responds to a question discussed on the TWiV podcast this morning, where Dr. Daniel Griffin reported that some patients test positive for weeks after their recovery, leaving them frightened and uncertain about what to do: New study finds Covid19 patients are no longer infectious after 11 days of getting sick even though some may still test positive. The data from Singapore adds to a growing body of evidence showing people don't transmit the infection once they're recovered (tweeted by @ScottGottliebMD).

Excellent piece of news for voter rights: "Breaking via WaPo: A federal judge has gutted a Florida state law requiring felons to pay all court fines and fees before they can register to vote, clearing the way for thousands of

Floridians to register in time for the November presidential election." There have been several positive legal rulings recently about voter rights. Aaand the RNC is suing in California to block voting by mail.

Good news from @JerseyCity: Tomorrow the city will be opening Hamilton Park and Van Vorst Park. Please adhere to the rules of wearing a face covering. Dogs must stay on the cement walkways, leashed and off the lawns. Please curb your dogs before entering the park. Thank you and stay safe!

Monday, May 25

Today's schedule: tai chi class at 1. There's a JC women's AA meeting at 7:30, so maybe I'll choose that one and then there's plenty of time to exercise and shower after tai chi. I have to allow more time for my hair to dry these days! Oh, I have to cook as well. So let's see:

10 - walk or exercise

1 - tai chi

2:30 - walk or exercise, shower

4:30 - cook

7:30 - JC women's AA meeting

It's Memorial Day, but that changes nothing.

Every day, the NYT groups states into three groups: increasing cases, mostly the same, and decreasing. Increasing: NC, TN, WI, AL, SC, NV, OK, AK, ND, ME, WV, and Puerto Rico.

They also list the biggest outbreaks. Prisons and meat processing and packing plants now occupy all positions at the top of the list -- perhaps because they're larger than congregate care facilities which start to appear when the list drops from the low thousands to the low hundreds. Wow, this list has become very long. There must be hundreds of institutions listed now, alternating lists of prisons, jails, nursing homes. It takes a while for other business to show up -- AbiMar Foods bakery, "Travel in Egypt," DelMonte Fresh Produce -- I know there should be some churches and funerals on here, but I can't find them.

I just accidentally signed up for a letter-writing event tomorrow, which turns

out to be ok. I have to print some more letters and set up the envelopes.

Another harmonious day. I did everything on my plan -- exercised and showered in the morning, walked in the afternoon, made a new recipe using the black lentils shipped to me by Rancho Gordo. I shouldn't get cocky, though -- all kinds of things could disturb this equilibrium.

Henry was on the Neighbors website and spotted a note by one of the people who manages the garden in Van Vorst Park; it said they were always seeking volunteer gardeners. I responded with my name and email address, and maybe I'll finally manage to do that -- it's something I've wanted to do ever since moving to Jersey City.

My nephew Mason called, something he's been doing from time to time since we had that money conversation. It's very sweet of him and it's fun to hear what he's thinking about.

Tuesday, May 26

As I went to sleep, I kept thinking that I was enfolded in a golden light. It seems terrible to say it, with such suffering going on in the world, but my life is lovely now. Walking, exercise, tai chi classes, AA meetings, letter-writing, occasional social events and phone calls -- this seems to be a magical combination for me.

I just got a subscription to Misfits Market -- organic food that's a big misshapen -- to be delivered on alternate Thursdays.

I set up 40 envelopes for the letter-writing session at 1:30 -- for which I don't have a zoom link yet. Hmm. The link came in plenty of time, and I finished my 40 letters.

A short walk to get some fresh air by the river on this perfect day, then back for my workout session with Ken.

Wednesday, May 27

Schedule: Housecleaning before lunch, sword class at 2, women's AA

meeting at 7:30

Printed out another 40 letters for the next event.

The US passed 100,000 officially recognized deaths from covid-19. I bet the real number is 10%-20% higher. Many early deaths were missed; there's some evidence that a few states (Florida, for example) are deliberately manipulating their numbers to keep them low -- for instance, listing the cause of death as pneumonia, disregarding the cause. One has to look at the tables and plots of excess deaths to find the true numbers.

Thursday, May 28

I woke up from a dream in which I was having a minor surgical procedure in a place that was just increasingly unsafe and unsanitary -- the door to the outdoors wasn't locked and or guarded, and there was construction debris everywhere. There was a sheep there pooping on the floor -- had the doctor turned into a sheep? Yes, and then no. The doctor came back in the morning and took me upstairs to a crowded cafeteria for breakfast. Nobody was wearing masks and I finally said I had to leave, saying, "The case fatality rate is 15% for people in my age group."

I don't think this is the first time I've had a dream like that -- all this opening up is making me nervous, and I'm steeling myself to assert that I have to continue distancing even if those around me, especially younger people, discontinue or weaken those practices.

Rachel Maddow talked about covid challenging hospital capacity in Alabama, Nebraska, Minnesota, Arizona, Iowa. France has banned hydroxychloroquine as a treatment for covid-19. An article in JAMA describes an analysis justifying the effectiveness of stay-at-home orders. The CDC has issued a warning about the number of false positives in serology tests.

The Seattle AA meeting, Practice These Principles, is just starting.

I had a couple of long phone conversations today -- Sheree in the morning, Jim as I was finishing my lunch.



I'm now taking an online class on contact tracing at [learn.astho.org](https://www.learncenter.org/). I got 34 out of 42 on the pre-test, so I'll be curious to see what I need to learn. It's hard to see how they could use volunteers in such sensitive work, but I'd like to learn about it.

They're defining close contact this way: Based on what we know now, a close contact is someone who was within six feet of PUI for at least 30 [CDC site says 15] minutes during that PUI's [Person Under Investigation] infectious period (48 hours before illness started until the time the PUI is isolated). Close contacts should stay home, maintain social distancing, and stay alert for symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough or shortness of breath) for 14 days after the last date of exposure.

And here's the job: Contact tracing is the process of identifying, assessing, and managing people, or "contacts," who have been exposed to a disease to prevent additional transmission. The objectives for COVID-19 contact tracing are to:

- Identify and notify individuals who might have come in contact with a PUI.
- Identify to what extent the contact has been exposed to the PUI.
- Establish if the contact is at risk of getting the virus themselves
- Provide the contact with appropriate guidance. This may include counseling them on how to prevent further spread of COVID-19, and linking or referring them to medical care and other prevention services.

Steps: Notify the PUI; Interview the PUI (normally the Case Investigator) to learn about them (demographics), educate them about isolation, and to learn about their contacts; Locate and Notify Contacts to learn about their health and to teach them about quarantine; Monitor Contacts to follow up on their health and compliance with quarantine.

Contact Tracing period: from 48 hours before the first symptom until their isolation began.

OK, enough of that for today. I'll have my session with Ken in a few minutes.

Friday, May 29

Last night, I was involved in a small kerfuffle on an at&t mailing list. Two people are very excited about a preprint of a paper suggesting that the MMR vaccine is the explanation of the age distribution of covid-19 deaths -- younger people have received it; older people probably didn't; it's common in some countries but not in others. They point to the sailors on the USS Roosevelt: "The data set provided by the U.S.S. Roosevelt is unique because unlike the general population which typically receives only MMR vaccinations as young children, the U.S. military gives all recruits new MMR vaccinations upon entry regardless of prior vaccine history. This means nearly everyone on the U.S.S. Roosevelt most likely had updated MMR vaccinations within the last several years. Most crew members of the U.S.S. Roosevelt likely fall into the 20-44 age range which is known to have a typical COVID-19 hospitalization rate of 14.3-20.8%. Currently at only a 0.6% hospitalization rate, the hospitalization rate for those on the U.S.S. Roosevelt appears to be around 20 times lower than that for the general population of COVID-19 positive people in the same age range."

I argued that the paper is weak. The sailors are likely to be much fitter than people of the same age in the wider community, with fewer co-morbidities; the authors didn't even consider whether certain countries used any NPI (non-pharmaceutical interventions). The two supporters of the MMR theory got defensive (which is understandable, really). I sent the paper mentioned above to TWiV for their consideration.

What I learn from TWiV, and from twitter, is that there are a lot of hastily-written papers out there.

When SARS-COV-2 first put in an appearance, lots of people said it was an equal-opportunity killer, or leveled the playing field, or something like that. Nobody says that any more. It's clear that it's hitting poor and working-class people much harder -- first because of their jobs and living conditions, and then because of their poor health care and underlying health conditions. Of course it's also clear that it's hitting old people much harder,

especially those in care homes. And, of course, prisoners.

And Evan resurfaced! I haven't had an invitation to play from my grandson for quite a while, but maybe that's because school kept him so busy, because he invited me to play for a couple of hours this morning -- he jumps from game to game in Roblox, and I just try to keep up. I had to cut him off after a couple of hours so I could have some lunch.

And everything else goes on. Four police in Minneapolis killed a black man in plain view of the public -- one knelt on his neck for several minutes while the other three looked on. There's a huge uproar going on in many cities, and everybody is doing just what you would expect them to do. [This is the first mention of the George Floyd murder, and the first hint of the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement.]

After my tai chi class, I went for a long walk and talked with Emmi. She's been having a hard few months, trying to care for her elderly mother in Philadelphia (who fell and dislocated her shoulder) while finishing her semester of teaching in NJ and preparing a summer class -- all during the pandemic, obviously. Things are calm right now, but everything is temporary with a frail parent. I guess it's both good and bad that she isn't living in any sort of institution right now.

Trump decided to finally defund the WHO. What a fool.

Oh, last night's dream: I was in Phoenix, Arizona. George Kormendi, one of my tai chi teachers, had moved there to join a small school there and I was hanging around with the students. I don't remember much of it by now, but I was disturbed that people weren't wearing masks. These remind me of drunk dreams, in that you're working all day to learn new rules, and the sleeping brain is continuing the policing job that it does when awake.

The news is pretty dreadful lately, and this week has been something else. Transcripts of Flynn's telephone conversations with the Russians were released; one of the cops in Minneapolis was arrested as demonstrations continue across the country; one of the Memorial Day parties at a notoriously crowded party in Arkansas has tested positive. Maybe we'll find out if there can be a super-spreader event at an outdoor party.

NJ still leads the nation in number of people per capita hospitalized with covid-19, though our numbers continue to decline.

Saturday, May 30

The protests and rioting continued last night. It's terrible and heartbreaking -- and so unsafe for this all to be happening during a pandemic. I'm 68, and I grew up during the Jim Crow era. I remember the Civil Rights movement. I remember the National Guard in the streets of Wilmington, Delaware when I was in high school. I still keep learning about the country's history of institutionalized racism. It suddenly occurs to me that the anger and distress about that covid targets poor black and brown people might be a part of this reaction to the murder of George Floyd. It's remarkable that people are chanting "I can't breathe" when a respiratory virus is killing people.

I just wrote a note to go with my first card to Evan, and enclosed a couple of comics clipped from the newspaper. It's hard to know if he'll find them funny, but it's worth a try. It's always fun to get mail, even when the mail isn't as good as you hope, right?

The Supreme Court just rejected (5-4) a suit by a church asserting that they should be exempt from public health measures.

I just attended an AA meeting, and was charmed when a woman said it was difficult for her when people do things differently, because, in her words, I feel that "when people are doing things differently, I'm wrong, like they're doing things differently <at> me."

I just watched a couple of videos about the rioting in Atlanta. One by Killer Mike (who I frankly never heard of, but he must have started out as a rapper), who gave a wonderful speech repeatedly instructing people to "plot, plan, strategize, organize, and mobilize" instead of "burning down their own house." The other was by the mayor of Atlanta, and her message was similar. The cumulative effect was to make me cry, so I know my emotional detachment from these dreadful events has been phony.

Took a walk along the Hudson in the afternoon.

Sunday, May 31

I played a new video game with Evan, or at least alongside Evan, for a while this morning, and learned how to build a little monkey army to shoot balloons (or bloons). Then it was time to go to qigong, and the class was perfect. Greg grounded the work in the context of the tensions of the current moment in a really effective way. He had us do the small movement where we lower our heads and gently cup our eyes in our hands, and I nearly started sobbing.

I just got back from a walk. I didn't wear a jacket, so I decided it would be a bit chilly along the river. Instead, I walked over to the canal and then to Van Vorst Park -- it's the first time I've been able to go inside the park. There were people sitting in small groups on the grass, and lying on blankets, sitting on the benches, playing with their children. It was lovely, and not overcrowded.

I just launched the family zoom session -- nobody's here yet, so maybe this one won't happen. I was pretty late with the announcement. ... Ah yes, they showed up and it was good.

Our prospective senior community's covid numbers in the current state report:

- confirmed covid cases among residents 16, staff 30
- confirmed covid deaths among residents 5, staff 0

Somebody tweeted that we're reliving 1918 and 1968 at the same time. Not a good combination. Just for fun, we're also repeating whatever year it was we first sent people into space.

Monday, June 1

Peaceful rallies during the day, mayhem at night. That seems to be the pattern in various cities now. I don't plan to go to any of the local peaceful demonstrations because of my concerns about the virus.

A handful of police departments (Camden, Flint) have responded with great sensitivity and creativity, joining peaceful marches and demonstrations, taking a knee along with members of their communities, speaking out against the fired Minneapolis officers. Others (Los Angeles) can be seen in photos and videos raising tensions, attacking peaceful protestors.

I was thinking last night again about the uncertainties of this period of reopening. For a while, the rules were clear and the consensus was clear, but now we're entering a more ambiguous period, where the rules are less certain. Healthy, younger people are becoming less careful and everybody will have to make decisions. I've already spoken with a couple of friends about whether it feels safe to get together outdoors. We're thinking that if we bring adequate cleaning supplies to feel safe in a public restroom, we could meet in state parks.

Actually, the country seems to be crashing into this period of reopening rather than entering it gradually. First we saw pictures of dense crowds of people partying over Memorial Day weekend, and now we see the demonstrators and rioters in big crowds, chanting slogans. The NYT is already reporting rising numbers of covid cases in more than a dozen states.

Listening to Dr. Daniel Griffin's report on TWiV.

- When his hospital in NYC screens people coming in for elective procedures, roughly 10 to 15% of them are testing positive, despite having no covid symptoms.
- Some people with covid-19 are sick for up to two months, some with fever the whole time, others with muscle and joint pain, or diarrhea, or thick mucus. Sometimes people get better, turn PCR negative, then get worse and test PCR positive again. Are they infectious the whole time? Further study is needed to assess their viral load.
- Some people who never even get sick enough to come to a hospital develop bacteremia (bacterial blood infection) at about week 3 or 4.
- They're still treating small numbers of children with pediatric multi-inflammatory syndrome -- fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, swelling of the lymph nodes, abdominal pain, heart problems. Only about a third have any respiratory symptoms. They respond well to therapy -- pooled IVIG (intravenous immunoglobulin) and steroids.

- Serology testing: Up to half the results may be wrong. Concepts required to really understand serology test results -- sensitivity; specificity; positive predictive value (which depends on prevalence); orthogonal testing (ie, repeating tests to raise predictive value).
- They started to use remdesivir, and then ran out. They plan to use it on patients who require oxygen, but do not require ventilators, where it might offer a small advantage.
- They're not using hydroxychloroquine at this point.
- He says the data for making treatment decisions is still thin.
- Q: What about proning? Yes, proning has been around for decades. One reason doctors were intubating people so readily in the early days is that it was part of the medical advice that came from China; it turned out to be wrong.
- Q: What about children with respiratory issues? Good question. We do see, however, that younger people have extremely high likelihood of surviving covid-19, even with this Kawasaki-like syndrome. Asthma has not been a significant issue.
- Q: T-cell counts? Neutrophils go up in sick people, lymphocytes go down -- and that ratio is one of the factors doctors use to assess patients. (The answer was more technical than that, obviously, because I don't even know how that <is> an answer, but it clearly was.)

#### Other TWiV discussions:

- Another vaccine trial, Phase I, reported in the Lancet. It seems safe and it induces antibodies.
- A study of existing pre-approved drugs has been tested on cultured virus samples in a lab; it suggests that a drug called lactoferrin may have an effect on the virus and could be tested in humans.
- A paper in Science trying to work out why some covid patients spread the virus to so many other people while most patients do not. About 10% of the cases lead to 80% of the spread. Most chains of infection die out without going anywhere. Is it the situation pure and simple or could it be something about the individuals? Is it their behavior?
- Some people continue to assert that aerosol transmission is prevalent, but they don't have any evidence to back up that claim.
- Cross-reactive immunity: It's possible that people who have had other coronaviruses in the past may have some protection against

covid-19, but this is uncertain for several reasons.

- A listener wrote in with another singing event in Germany that was the source of a major cluster of covid cases.
- Q: What about swimming pools? They don't think it would be wise to use a public swimming pool, though you might take into consideration the local prevalence of the virus.

I'm not sure of the name of the TWiV participant who said this, but it's just what I've been thinking about: "... because this [reopening] is being done out of step with the science, I think individuals are going to have to make their own decisions about what level of risk they're willing to tolerate."

Before I went for a walk, I was feeling pretty lousy. It's been a terrible week in the news, and maybe I sat around too long this morning; I don't know. Anyway, I started feeling better as soon as I got outside and started moving. I'll try to catch an AA meeting this evening, too -- that seems to be good for my spirits.

Tuesday, June 2

I did go to a meeting last night, a Jersey City women's meeting. I was -- and am -- still disturbed by the events in the country, but it helped. And I'm back at a meeting this morning, the Seattle morning meeting. Somebody just said that his sponsor told him that needing approval from others is selfish because it meant he wanted something from them. That might be a useful thought for me, with my insecurities about my own decisions. Grow up already, kid. I'm remembering a sort of prayer I used to say, or think: If there's something in me, some block or resistance, that's getting in the way of something I'm almost ready to learn, I'm willing to have it lifted.

How does the day go by so quickly? Evan Facetimed me in the morning for an hour of video games, then breakfast, then AA. Somewhere in there, I did a load of laundry. Then I set up 35 envelopes, had lunch, and joined the 1:30 zoom session to write GOTV letters. And now it's 3:30, I put my laundry away, and I have plenty of time to get ready for my session with Ken.

Wednesday, June 3



Our housecleaner Angie came today. We were nervous about it, but I think it was ok. I texted her ahead of time to let her know the building's protocol about masks and elevators, and to let her know that we would be keeping our distance and wearing masks -- to protect both her and us. For the rest of the day, we'll wash our hands more frequently and try our damndest not to touch our faces.

When she came, we left -- first we put some air in the tires of Henry's car, and then we walked around at Liberty State Park. I'll be getting ready for my sword class in just a few minutes.

[Speaking of the demonstrations about the killing of George Floyd:] This is an amazing historic moment, and it gets more amazing by the moment. I don't know <how> many demonstrations have been taking place -- I've read that they've happened in every state, many of them huge, and I've seen pictures of enormous demonstrations happening in other countries, which is astounding! I've been glad to hear a few people express optimism that this might be a turning point in the US treatment of Black people. It's certainly painful to imagine that we could fall much lower.

I just watched a video by Wanda Sykes on Instagram. She delivered a strong lecture, if I may put it like that, to white people, saying, basically -- white people, this is not our problem, it's your problem, so fix it. Finish the Civil War.

I hope she's pleased to see the sea of white faces in Boise, Idaho, at a Black Lives Matter protest.

Hoboken women's AA meeting.

Thursday, June 4

Various medical results: People with blood type A may be more vulnerable to covid-19; men with prostate cancer on androgen-deprivation therapy may be less vulnerable. Some (how many?) patients have long-term medical problems including pulmonary hypertension and emphysema. Hydroxychloroquine doesn't work as a preventative, but a key publication

showing it doesn't work as a treatment has been discredited. Remdesivir is effective in monkeys if given very early, but since it has to be delivered by IV, humans are getting it too late to be very helpful.

Dystopian political events: Barr is deploying Bureau of Prison officers on the streets and officers from a mash-up of federal agencies who aren't wearing identification and aren't trained in managing mass protests. I think this may only be happening in Washington, DC, because no state governor would allow it. Washington, DC needs statehood.

I'm watching last night's Rachel Maddow. I've been backing away from the news a bit, so I hadn't realized how good James Mattis's statement is. And I hadn't realized that it's now certain that the Republican convention won't be held in North Carolina this summer. It's not clear where it <would> be welcome, given Trump's insistence that it be held without any social distancing measures. All four policemen involved in George Floyd's death have now been charged.

New large covid outbreaks: a gigantic fishing trawler out of Seattle, a paper products manufacturing plant in Kansas City, a stadium construction crew in Alabama, a farm in Tennessee. Meat processing plants, prisons -- these continue to have outbreaks.

A good line from Kamala Harris -- Trump held up "the Holy Bible like it was a prop or a Trump steak."

I took one of my cleanup walks after lunch, filling a plastic bag, mostly at Peninsula Park, before walking over to Van Vorst Park. I was in a disturbed mood most of the time, so I listened only to calming podcasts -- a Brain Science episode about glial cells, and a couple of Gil Fronsdal's dharma talks. After I got home, I set up 20 envelopes for Saturday before my workout session. A scallion omelet for dinner, and I'll be ready for tai chi at 7:30.

The NYT says that more cases were reported on May 30 than ever before: 134,064, driven by Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. President Jair Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly minimized the threat, said, "We are sorry for all the dead, but that's everyone's destiny."

Still, more than a quarter of all known deaths have been in the US. And all numbers, everywhere, are still too low.

Friday, June 5

I'm watching Rachel Maddow. She took time to broadcast a big section of Rev. Al Sharpton's eulogy at Floyd George's memorial service in Minneapolis. I don't think I ever really heard him preach, and he's so good he's bringing me to tears. He said he remembered, years ago, being somewhere to participate in a demonstration, and hearing a young white woman saying to him, "Nigger, go home." In Minneapolis, a young girl looked at him and he braced himself. She raised a fist and said, "No justice, no peace."

I was already feeling teary after reading an account of a demonstration on the steps on City Hall in Jersey City in a local paper. According to this account, this were growing tense as the crowd was yelling at the police above them on the steps to take a knee. "With the crowd chanting "take a knee, take a knee," officer Ramirez came down off the steps of City Hall where she had been posted in a phalanx of officers, some in riot gear. Standing next to Pamela Johnson, executive director of the Jersey City Anti-Violence coalition, she slowly knelt. The crowd roared with approval. The women hugged. Within minutes, another group of officers – black, white and hispanic — followed officer Ramirez's cue and knelt under city hall's portico. Several people in the ethnically diverse crowd openly wept."

Rachel's talking about the unidentified armed officers on the streets of DC. Who are they and where are they from? Prison guards? ICE? Or random vigilantes?

I dreamed that Hugh Laurie gave me a haircut, and it was very sensual. Oh, those little hairs. I noticed with concern that we weren't wearing masks.

I'm attending the Seattle AA meeting today. It really is an excellent meeting.

Set up 40 envelopes for tomorrow; lunch; tai chi class.

Cooking flageolet beans from Rancho Grande. Gosh, they're wonderful. Just as good as the black lentils I cooked last week.

As I listen to a discussion on TWiV about viruses in bats and other wild creatures in China, I'm taking a break to read the NJ Spotlight evening report on covid-19. The numbers are still declining slowly -- deaths, people hospitalized, percent positive in the PCR testing -- and the state's calculations show an  $R$  sub t of .82. I don't see how it will stay there as reopening continues, but it's good to hear all the same. Testing continues of people in care homes, prisons, and seasonal farm workers.

Places like gyms and hair salons are opening soon, and Henry and I will have some hard decisions to make.

Headline in the Washington Post: NFL says it was wrong in handling of protests over racial injustice, encourages players to do so peacefully.

Headlines in the NYT: The U.S. is still confirming more than 20,000 new cases a day, with counts rising in the South and West; The federal government undercounted the number of virus deaths in U.S. nursing homes; Trump tells governor of Maine: 'You better get the state open.' (Oh, he's fighting with the governor about a facility that manufactures swabs.)

18 states have seen increases in cases. That number itself keeps increasing. The daily bar graph for U.S. case counts has ceased to decline, and may even be showing an uptick across the past week. Deaths are still decreasing, but not by much, and of course they lag cases by at least two weeks.

I'm just listening to Preet Bharara interview Cyrus Vance about the decisions that prosecutors have to make, and I was struck by something Vance said about disregarding criticism and "keeping your eye on the basketball hoop." It reminded me of something I learned when I took Model Mugging several years ago. One of the scenarios we enacted went like this: we're asleep, and we wake up to find someone sitting on top of us, saying menacing and creepy things. We learned to ignore what the

attacker was saying and just focus on our task: to find one of the openings we learned that made it possible for us to fight back. It never occurred to me to bring that approach to other situations.

Last night, I was reciting the AA steps to myself as a way to settle myself to fall asleep, as I've been doing for maybe a year now. It's an interesting practice, because different steps may suddenly grab my attention on different nights, and last night it was the second step: "We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore our sanity." Of course the AA founders, and most AA members, interpret that to mean God. As an atheist, I am accustomed to reinterpreting AA language to make it meaningful to me, and that step suddenly spoke to me. I definitely have a tendency, still, to want to solve my problems all by myself when I might find life a bit easier if I were more willing to believe that help is available. So I'm glad that I've been drawn back to AA meetings after several years of absence. It might help me grow.

Saturday, June 6

The Washington Post has an article saying that partial reopening in Europe has not led to a large resurgence of the virus (except in France). Possible reasons include: (1) some behavioral changes, like hand-washing and mask-wearing, have persisted; (2) the warmer weather reduces transmissibility; (3) people are avoiding indoor settings and embracing the outdoors (which is a combination of 1 and 2); (4) the virus has changed (there's no evidence for that theory); (5) the reopening is still partial, and some activities (like air travel) have not resumed. The virus is still circulating, and small outbreaks still occur (indoor gatherings, meatpacking plants).

I attended the 10am Barrow St Women's AA meeting. I think I have a craving to talk to a friend, so I'll think about who to call today.

I never did call anybody, and I was a little bit cranky this afternoon. All the same, I wrote my 40 letters and I did some light exercise. After dinner, and after a storm had blown through bringing lower humidity, I took a walk, and that lightened my mood.

I didn't join the large Black Lives Matter demonstration at City Hall. I considered going and staying safely away from people, but the heat and humidity settled it. I saw a few pictures, though, and it was even larger than the demonstration against gun violence organized by the high school students a few years ago -- very impressive. And the city continued to wisely avoid escalating tensions -- police were not wearing riot gear, for example. Mayor Fulop tweeted: "We made a choice that we weren't going to treat the crowd like opposition. Why would we ever do that? We know that we work for the ppl in this crowd + we know their points are valid. We decided that the path forward starts very much w/us listening"

I haven't heard of any major problems at any of the demonstrations in New Jersey, and I hope that continues.

The marches today have been enormous and ubiquitous. Many cities and states are already announcing changes. Progressive legislators want to take advantage of this clear demonstration of popular support and enact new laws.

NYT: covid-19 cases are now increasing in 21 states. (Wasn't that 14 just a few days ago?) Their bar plot of case counts shows a clear uptick.

Sunday, June 7

My Sunday morning qigong class just ended, and it was lovely, as usual.

Carl Zimmer tweeted out an article by Judy George in [medpagetoday.com](https://www.medpagetoday.com) (never heard of it) with the headline, "Most Hospitalized COVID Patients Have Neurologic Symptoms -- Severe complications seen in all stages of COVID-19, including recovery." The article reports on a study in Neurology by a Spanish doctor, Carlos Manuel Romero-Sanchez. These are the milder issues: "In the study, nonspecific symptoms such as myalgias (17.2%), headache (14.1%), and dizziness (6.1%) were common. Anosmia (4.9%) and dysgeusia (6.2%) tended to occur early -- 60% of the time they occurred, they were the first clinical manifestation of COVID-19 -- and were more frequent in less severe cases." These are more severe: "Potentially severe conditions, like stroke and inflammatory diseases, appeared in late COVID stages, Romero-Sanchez said." "In the study, one in five patients

(19.6%) hospitalized with COVID-19 had disorders of consciousness." Apparently that includes delirium and coma. There were all kinds of other issues, like movement disorders and myopathy. They don't mention whether these patients were on ventilators.

Myalgia is muscle pain. Dysgeusia is a distortion of the sense of taste - maybe what Henry and I would call "taste perversion".

More reasons to be careful.

After lunch, I went for a walk. I brought three plastic bags with me this time, and picked up trash along the fence around the fenced-in lot behind the Colgate clock. It's just a block, but I filled three bags. People can be such terrible slobs -- I picked up several beer bottles and even a couple of used diapers. Then I peeled off my gloves, sanitized my hands, and walked over to Peninsula Park and on to Van Vorst Park. It was a lovely day.

For dinner, I ate the flageolet beans again -- they are really wonderful, so tender.

Henry and I learned on Facebook that there's a fire at White Pine Camp in the Adirondacks. The buildings are all made of wood and very old -- famous for being the "summer White House" for the Coolidges one year. If it's the workshop burning, then the Great House can't be far behind. How awful. Karen says it's been dangerously dry there, too, and there are big trees all around.

I'm going to Cheesequake State Park tomorrow morning to meet Sheree and take a walk. An outing with another human being! This feels radical.

Monday, June 8

I woke up after having been asleep for about an hour and was really terrified. The prospect of going in the world with another person filled me with fear. I remembered Jeremy saying that we are training ourselves to be really afraid of people. I was gentle with the fear, and promised it I would be careful, and then listened to Gil Fronsdal talk about equanimity.

The Cheesequake Park outing was great. It has good trails -- hillier than we expected, being so near the shore, with sandy trails. (Watch out for the roots, though! We each caught a toe several times, and Sheree went down once.) And though the buildings were closed to visitors, there was a proper restroom, with soap and water, so I didn't need those Clorox wipes and gloves I brought. I feel as though I crossed a major hurdle on my path back into the world.

We wore our masks and chatted freely, just trying to keep a few feet between us. We didn't pass a lot of people on the trail, which was a good thing, because almost none of them were wearing masks, despite clear instructions from the park administration.

Our first shipment from Misfits Market arrived while I was gone, and it seems ok -- apples, berries, onions, mushrooms, spaghetti squash, sweet potatoes. They weren't remarkably misshapen or discolored, either.

There's a women's meeting tonight at 7:30. Tomorrow I can go to the Seattle meeting in the morning.

I saw that wonderful horse poster in downtown Jersey City again yesterday. I see I haven't mentioned it here before. It depicts a horse and includes a couple of phrases in Latin -- "Sede in domo tua" and "lave manus," ie, Stay home and wash your hands. It has been modified and now includes "BLM" and "Spectemur agendo," meaning "let us be judged by our acts." And now I can see who created it: Dylan Egon, [dylanegon.store](http://dylanegon.store). It's even for sale, with proceeds going to the Jersey City Medical Center Foundation. I probably have to buy one, but I want to get it framed if I do.

Tuesday, June 9

Today's schedule: Seattle AA meeting at 10, letter-writing with the Oakland-based group at 1:30, workout with Ken at 4:30.

Rachel Maddow's first segment was about the fraught topic of defunding the police. She interviewed a criminal justice professor who did a great job of putting some meat on the bones of that idea. Now she's talking about the



sharp increases in new covid-19 cases in Arizona and Utah, both of which are now having their hospitals seriously taxed. The health commissioner in North Carolina is also issuing an alert. Cases are rising in Mississippi, Florida, and many other states. The federal government has decided to be very quiet.

Trump tweeted something at least as despicable and loony as anything he's said to date: "Buffalo protester shoved by Police could be an ANTIFA provocateur. 75 year old Martin Gugino was pushed away after appearing to scan police communications in order to black out the equipment." This was the man who approached the police in Buffalo, and was shoved backward until he lost his footing and his head hit the ground so hard that he began bleeding from the ears.

I'm just learning, as I read an article by Siddhartha Mukherjee in the New Yorker, about the Hindu goddess Shitala, who is "meant to protect children from smallpox, heal the pain of those who contract it, and dampen the fury of a pox epidemic."

I've been enjoying what I learn about the meaning of the demand to "defund the police." One of the things I understand is the need to build a staff of social workers, mental health workers, and people trained in conflict mediation. These are the people who should be responding to most of the 911 calls. There's also a need to weaken the ability of police unions to shield abusive and violent police officers. Demilitarizing the police would also be a good thing -- and all this would be easier if there weren't so many guns in the hands of the population at large. Actually, I haven't heard anybody mention gun control, but it has to come up eventually, because we know the police are afraid of being shot.

Wednesday, June 10

Schedule: Sword class at 2, women's AA meeting at 7:30.

Wednesday is cleaning day, but we didn't have to do very much now that Angie has started coming -- vacuuming, tidying, cleaning a few surfaces.

I've started tackling the pile of magazines to make sure I don't completely drown. We're approaching the 30-year anniversary of the bombing of the

Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin, and I read the article about it in the Alumni magazine. I was at home in Delaware when it happened, because I can remember my stunned astonishment when I saw the front page of the Wilmington evening newspaper and seeing the picture of David Fine, my acquaintance from high school -- and from our freshman year at UW-Madison. (Our link was our mutual friend Rod Beaton, and I reconnected with David on Facebook as Rod was dying.) David and I only crossed paths in Madison a few times, really. The last couple of times were during the aftermath of the bombing of Cambodia when the school was pretty much shut down. I saw him at a demonstration, I think, and then he asked me to be his "trip guide" one day when he wanted to take LSD. Or maybe that was earlier. I was fine with doing it, and I only wish I remembered <anything> about the day! He was the only one of us having adventures, I guess.

New outbreaks, large or small, according to the Washington Post: a Maine facility that produces tests for Abbott Labs; a Tesla factory; members of the DC and Nebraska National Guards. Each state has its own testing strategy -- anyone in Maryland can get tested; in Oregon, only people with symptoms; in Rhode Island, all nursing home residents have been tested. There still aren't enough surgical gowns or N95 masks. There's no national strategy.

NASCAR just announced that they would prohibit the Confederate flag at all their events. At about the same time, Trump tweeted his support for military bases staying named after Confederate generals.

Studies continue to appear that argue strongly for the use of masks.

There have now been, according to the official count, more than two million covid-19 cases in the US and more than 113K deaths.

Thursday, June 11

I managed to sleep until 8, which is great for me.

I'm watching the news programs I recorded last night - Chris Hayes, Rachel Maddow. Again, mask-wearing is turning out to be very effective. That may

be the reason the hair stylist in Missouri with covid-19 didn't infect anybody -- the salon required everyone to wear masks.

These news programs are covering both the protests and the efforts to create new legislation and policies in response, and SARS-CoV-2.

On twitter now: GOP-led Senate Armed Services Committee has adopted an amendment behind closed doors for Pentagon to remove the names of Confederate generals from military assets within three years.

Also in the news: A retired federal judge tapped to review the criminal case against onetime national security adviser Michael Flynn found evidence of misconduct by both the government and Mr. Flynn and urged that the retired three-star general be sentenced for the crime he pleaded guilty to back in 2017.

I was looking this morning for a clinical trial of a vaccine I could sign up for. I found one, but I'd have to travel to NYC to participate. Hmm.

Ohio State Sen. Steve Huffman(R): "Could it just be that African Americans -- the colored population -- do not wash their hands as well as other groups? Or wear a mask? Or do not socially distance themselves?" Jesus.

Merriam-Webster is revising the definitions of racism and related words to ensure that structural, systemic racism is incorporated into those meanings.

What an extraordinary time.

Ari Melber (in for Rachel) is talking about the new canvas that is the black chain-link fence that was installed around the White House. People have hung signs, created patterns with ribbons, attached art. As the fence starts to come down, it's good to learn that curators from the Smithsonian want to preserve some of it. [ I don't even remember that -- it was installed during the Black Lives Matter protests in DC. ]

This is part of an email I just sent to a few friends:

*I love the occasional tweets I see where people say things like, "If I read*

*that the president had accused an elderly man of falling down harder than he was pushed, I never could have predicted the context." Everything that happens feels like that now. When a virus started to emerge in China, who could have predicted that a few months later, we would be all be learning about defunding the police? Google's spellcheck doesn't even know that "defunding" is a word. Who could have imagined that a 22-year-old woman would write to Merriam Webster, saying that their definition of racism was too narrow and personal, and get an almost immediate reply saying that they would fix it? Who could have imagined Sarah Cooper? Or that Chef Andre has decided to serve food and drinks in the <voting lines> of the more racist, anti-democratic states next November?*

*We are living in astonishing times.*

I could hardly tear myself away from the news today, so I never got outside. I did my stretches, tai chi, and some warmups before starting with Ken at 4:30. And tai chi class at 7:30 was good.

Friday, June 12

It's a sunny morning, so I was up by about 6. I'm catching up on last night's news, and I'm going to start setting up envelopes for tomorrow's letter-writing event. Maybe I'll take a morning walk and attend the 10:00 Seattle meeting. .... My walk this morning kept me outside when that meeting was happening, and now I don't think I feel like a meeting.

This afternoon, I watched a talk by the author of 'White Fragility' on YouTube, following a link Ken sent me. She's very good, and I should read the book. I've mentioned Ken, my personal trainer, several times, but I might not have mentioned that he's African-American. Yesterday, he made the interesting observation that he's never seen so much introspection about racism among white people, as if they're doing a 4th step on racism. (Since we have AA in common, that's a natural reference for him to make.) It may have been this talk that inspired that thought. Of course I listened to what she said and tried to see myself -- sometimes I felt she was naming me, as when she talked about the racist atmosphere we grew up with. Since I was born in 1952, I'm old enough to remember the time before the Civil Rights movement, when kids in my elementary school shamelessly told racist jokes and there were very few images of black people (colored

people or Negroes, as we said then) in the media. I learned years later that a black family had been denied membership at our swim club -- another family I knew quit the club over that, but not a word was said at my house, even though my sisters were friends with a girl in that family. That probably says everything you need to know about where my family stood -- friendly to black people but not willing to cede any of our own privilege (a term that wouldn't have made sense then).

When she talked about how people fail to appreciate the importance of structural racism, I could feel a bit superior -- I have learned a few things since those days. But when she talked about our individual interactions with black people, I felt skewered -- I have never tried to talk through an uncomfortable interaction with one of my black co-workers, and I have precious few black friends. And knowing about structural racism doesn't mean I don't have a head full of stereotypes, either. I'm usually smart enough to keep my mouth shut, but that means I don't take chances and don't grow.

Saturday, June 13

It's a beautiful day, and a bit cooler than the past 2 or 3 days have been. I'll go to (I keep editing out 'go to' since I'm not going anywhere, but what the hell) a women's AA meeting at 10 and a letter-writing call at 2. I set up 60 envelopes yesterday, and completed 20 of the letters -- then ordered some stamps while I was at it. I'm up to 440 letters to be mailed in late October.

Covid-19 cases are holding pretty steady in the US, with around 20K new cases each day. Deaths are still declining -- under 1K deaths per day. Cases are rising very fast in several states (Florida and Texas just reported daily highs in new cases), though, so we don't know how long that will hold. And there are well over 100K new cases each day worldwide. (All numbers are surely undercounts.)

The AA meeting was about the 9th step, making amends. I don't have any nagging memories of things I did in my drinking days, so long ago, but I certainly have some memories of friendships I have neglected or run away from after an awkward interaction, especially when I behaved badly. That deserves some more thought.

At many of the meetings recently, people refer in different ways to protests, or to police violence, or to the need to learn about themselves -- I think this is all white people. I'm not sure I've heard the black people say anything.

Watching the news programs from last night. There's a lot of stupid out there -- people are very exercised about the "oppression" of being required to wear masks. At least one health commissioner has resigned in the face of personal attacks and demonstrations at her home. There are a lot of smart governors, too, and they have practice thickening their skins. The governor of Oregon is delaying reopening as cases rise, and talking about the strategy of 'test-trace-isolate.'

Cases are rising in many states: Texas, North Carolina, Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Oklahoma, ... The Feds just released data on nursing homes and they're too inaccurate to be useful -- undercounting so badly. Some of the protective gear provided to nursing homes is not usable -- the gowns, in particular, are so large they need to be trimmed or taped or otherwise adjusted.

I wrote my letters, and then took a walk along the river. Now watching 'The Purple Rose of Cairo.' I had remembered how funny it is watching the movie character be continually surprised by real life, but I had forgotten the deeply sad ending, all carried by Mia Farrow's face.

Sunday, June 14

Today's schedule: Fresh Direct delivery (always an exciting event), qigong at 11, Tina's New Labor fundraising event at 5. I'd like to take a walk in the afternoon, and finish my last few letters at some point.

Everything went perfectly, and it was another beautiful day. When I walked around Van Vorst Park, I saw a sign giving an email address to write to if you wanted to adopt a downtown JC block and be responsible for picking up trash. I wrote eagerly and said I'm already doing it -- lately, I've adopted the block between Essex and the Hudson River (picked up two bags there today), and often I also pick up trash at what I've been calling Peninsula Park but which Google calls the Morris Canal Park. I'm so glad to know that

I'm not alone! I tried to start something like that at the HPHA a few years ago, but I haven't been able to attend their meetings, so nothing came to pass. This is the initiative of a teenage girl in the neighborhood. This will be my second time being directed by teenagers in NJ -- the first was when I volunteered to help with the high school gun control rally and march a couple of years ago.

The New Labor event was very interesting. It's a group that started 20 years ago, trying to figure out how to support workers who fall outside the union system -- undocumented domestic workers, for example, and other service workers, most of whom seem to be Latinx. Recently, they've worked on getting driver's licenses for undocumented New Jerseyans, creating a handout domestic workers can give their employers to spell out their requirements for safety during the pandemic -- eg, employers should provide gloves and masks, and both parties should commit to tell the other if anyone is sick or has been sick. I donated \$200, and I will suggest other people to invite next year!

Monday, June 15

I'm always checking on people's mask-wearing and distancing behavior when I'm out for my walks, and compliance is pretty spotty. Most people aren't masking when they're outdoors, and I can only hope that they're more compliant indoors. In the parks, people seem to be pretty good about distancing, though I think the outdoor restaurants look too crowded for my comfort.

Goals for today: Set up 40 envelopes for tomorrow's call. T'ai chi class at 1. Cook beans this evening. Do my stretches, probably take a walk.

Goals accomplished. Started my crochet project, a potholder made with thread and a number 7 steel needle. The thread is so tiny that it took me several false starts to get the first row completed properly. It's going better now.

NY and NJ still have decreasing numbers of cases, along with 19 other states. We still have 22 states where the number of cases of covid-19 is increasing, and Pence is trying to claim that these increases are due to

more testing, but hospitalizations are also increasing in some states. We don't know yet whether the protests will lead to higher numbers. A few bars and restaurants that reopened are having to close after employees or customers have tested positive.

Tuesday, June 16

Andy Slavitt's thread on twitter yesterday includes this: "What is population immunity level? Convergence around 5-7%. Obviously biased by 20% or so in NY, so could be 1-3% many places. Right now we're doubling every 2 months or so. So immunity could be 10-15% by the end of the summer."

I've heard in several places now that treatment is improving, so fatalities of hospitalized patients are declining. Doctors use proning more and ventilators less; they use blood thinners early; there seems to be some success using steroids. (One big study in the Lancet strongly recommends a particular steroid; it needs replication, and side effects need to be considered.)

On the other hand, there is growing concern about the long-term effects of covid-19, with some people remaining sick for months. Nobody knows what proportion of patients this affects.

Watching the news from last night. It looks as though the hydroxychloroquine story is finally over, (or should be, now that the FDA has withdrawn its emergency approval). [ Ha! ]

The Supreme Court ruled yesterday 6-3 that the 1964 Civil Rights Act provides employment protections for gay and transgender people. It's a wonderful and surprising ruling, and Roberts and Gorsuch both voted with the majority.

California police unions have joined the public discussion by agreeing with several proposals aimed at removing "bad apples" from the force. They have not suggested any structural reforms, but it's an unusual start given the intransigence of the NY police union.

I'm at the Seattle AA meeting. AA meetings are really good for me



because I live in such a bubble -- my world isn't large enough. And I'm not talking here about social distancing!

In the WSJ today, "Six months into the coronavirus crisis, there's a growing consensus about a central question: How do people become infected? It's not common to contract Covid-19 from a contaminated surface, scientists say. And fleeting encounters with people outdoors are unlikely to spread the coronavirus. Instead, the major culprit is close-up, person-to-person interactions for extended periods. Crowded events, poorly ventilated areas and places where people are talking loudly—or singing, in one famous case—maximize the risk."

A new book, "The Impostors: How Republicans Quit Governing and Seized American Politics," The author, Steve Benen, argues that "Republicans are effectively impostors, presenting themselves as officials who are ready to take seriously the substance of problem solving, but whose sole focus is the pursuit and maintenance of power." Well, that seems obvious.

There's an opinion piece in the NYT today with the headline and subhead, "Expecting Students to Play It Safe if Colleges Reopen Is a Fantasy; Safety plans border on delusional and could lead to outbreaks of Covid-19 among students, faculty and staff." I love that. Denial is a powerful force.

Clash on the India-China border, where the countries have a dispute about boundaries. The Chinese moved troops inside a disputed region and refused to withdraw. Or the Indians did; don't ask me.

Someone tweeted an explanation of the use of steroids. They are especially effective in the very ill, people on mechanical ventilators, who may have over-active immune systems. Steroids suppress the immune system, so need to be used with great caution to avoid bacterial infections and other long-term damage. The data from the trial in the news today has not been released.

A woman and 15 (!) of her friends have tested positive after a night out at a bar in Jacksonville Beach, FL. She's a 40-year-old health care worker and should know better -- but denial is a powerful thing.

Wednesday, June 17

Trump is planning visits to both Oklahoma and Alabama, two of the more than 20 states with rising rates of covid. The governor of Texas will not allow cities to require distancing or other control measures, and says there are plenty of hospital beds; at the same time, he pleads with people to distance voluntarily and blames people in their twenties for irresponsible behavior. Huh. And of course we shall ignore Pence's boasting about what a good job the Trump administration has done.

Russia wants to get back into the G7, and he has Trump's support. The G7 meeting scheduled to take place in the US in this coming year, though? Nobody wants to come, so it's off.

Henry and I took a walk at lunchtime, and I drew his attention to a peculiar bit of graffiti on York St. saying only "Keep not back." He said it sounded Biblical, and the only google hits I find are from Isaiah 43:6. (King James: I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;) (God is the speaker.) Here's a recent interpretation of their meaning: "Dear friend, are you already saved? Then keep not back from union with the Lord's people."

People are beginning to read advance copies of John Bolton's book. Donald Trump is, of course, exactly who we think he is. He has explicitly asked leaders of several countries to do things that will help him be re-elected, and we are not surprised. There's a lot of outrage that Bolton declined to testify when the House asked him to, instead saving these stories -- and saving criticisms of the House for not including more articles of impeachment. But would the GOP senators have changed their votes? Doubtful.

I told Vote Forward that I would help them with short-term experiments, so I just signed up to send letters to Maine voters with instructions for applying to vote by mail. I have to mail them by next Wednesday.

Thursday, June 18

The governors of Texas and Arizona have relented, and will allow

governors to mandate mask-wearing, or at least to require businesses to require mask-wearing.

This is an amazing tweet: "Tick-borne viruses are on the move in the United States - chronically understudied, with severe symptoms and very few treatments - but we're doing the absolute bare minimum to track them or their vectors. Heartland, Powassan, Bourbon, and probably others" And the attachment says there's a case of the Heartland virus, believed to be transmitted by the Lone Star tick, in Appanoose County in Iowa. What a lot of fabulous names.

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — A church in rural northeastern Oregon is now the epicenter of the state's largest coronavirus outbreak, as 236 people tested positive for the disease, authorities said Tuesday.

I was up at 5 am for a while, feeling as though I've been too solitary for the past week or so. I put myself back to sleep listening to Gil Fronsdal. In fact, I hardly remember a word of the talk, so it must have calmed me down almost immediately.

The Onion or the NYT? Oh, you know. "The president has told advisers he wants to find and prosecute whoever let it be known that he was in the bunker, per 3 ppl familiar with what he's said" (Maggie Haberman @maggieNYT)

I just got back from seeing the chiropractor and picking up a few things at Trader Joe's. It felt more normal and more manageable than the first time I went to see him. For one thing, I asked him to wear a mask and he did so, telling me that I was the first person to ask him to! Most of his clients are more suburban, so perhaps they're not on as high an alert status as I am. (That's a bit mysterious, actually, because he sees a couple of nurses, he said.) And Trader Joe's has a clear and practiced protocol -- a waiting line with space; no hand-held baskets, just carts; not a lot of people in the store; no re-usable bags, just paper. It made me feel good to be in the world and have it feel predictable and safe.

The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the Trump administration can't immediately end DACA, a blow to Trump and Miller, and a tremendous relief for the Dreamers.

Trump just told the WSJ, "I did something good: I made Juneteenth very famous. It's actually an important event, an important time. But nobody had ever heard of it." And God help me, that's partly true. Many people had, of course, heard of it, but it's definitely better known now.

There's a big fight going on on the Facebook page of this building. Management and the Board, based on legal advice, are probably not going to open the pool this summer, and maybe not the gym, either. The argument is this:

- any Covid-related claims are a risk for our association that can't be insured which means that the community is liable with its financial assets; Board members are also personally liable.
- the cost of adding security personnel plus additional cleaning (some of the requirements require cleaning of furniture and other objects after every use) to ensure that social distancing is being complied with is an expense that needs to be weighed against the usage of the deck (i.e.. if for example 20% of our community is using the space but 100% bear the cost).

A couple of people are incandescent with indignation. Most people are neutral, positive, or mildly disappointed. It reminds me of Doris Lessing's autobiography, where she said that when she encounters people who are angry or aggrieved, she asks them (or at least imagines asking them), "What were you promised and who promised it to you?" Well, of course the simple answer here is that the building's management promised us certain amenities, but you could go deeper: Who promised us that things would never change?

Henry and I are riveted by a slow-moving drama we're watching in the Hudson River. There's a barge just north of the Paulus Hook ferry terminal. Two divers climb down ladders into the Hudson and gather large pieces of junk -- old paving material, chunks of some sort of poles -- and attach them to a chain or load them into a large metal bucket, at least 6 feet on a side; they're pulled up by a crane on the barge. We can't imagine why it's happening, but it's great to watch.

I've heard a couple of black leaders interviewed this week -- Karen Bass, I think, and now Kamala Harris -- emphasize how important the demonstrations are. Harris put it very clearly -- in order to make progress, we need people on the inside and pressure from the outside. This is so true, and illustrates what has been missing. People were just waiting for Obama to fix everything.

Friday, June 19

In Arizona, indoor mask-wearing has been mandated in many cities -- mayors wasted no time once the governor stopped blocking them. In California, Gavin Newsom (see, I know the names of some governors, especially the Democrats) has mandated mask-wearing.

The Nebraska governor, on the other hand, opposed masks so strongly that he has told local officials that they will forfeit federal covid money if they require them.

Goodness, Malala just finished a degree at Oxford, and she's 22. She's not a little girl any more. And congratulations to her.

Did a few chores today -- laundry, bills, set up the family zoom for Sunday -- and prepared 20 letters for Vote Forward for an experiment they're running in Maine.

I lay on my back for a while, to see if that would help with the pain I've had near my right shoulder blade since (I think) February. It seems to hurt a bit more after I see the chiropractor about it, and I'm beginning to think I need to see someone else.

Henry and I took a short walk at Liberty State Park in the afternoon.

In setting up the DVR to record the new Perry Mason series, I spotted and recorded an old episode of Perry Mason that included a talking parrot voiced by Mel Blanc! It sounded a bit like Daffy Duck.

Saturday, June 20

I just attended the Barrow St women's meeting. What an excellent meeting that was, with people so openly discussing their own fearfulness and how it manifests. They also started a discussion that had also been opened at the Hoboken women's meeting the other night -- whether and how to begin meeting in person again. It depends first on the policies of the host location (the Barrow St mansion hasn't reopened yet), but then there are questions to resolve: capacity, seating, masking, sanitizing. And is it possible to have a hybrid meeting, with some women in the room and others logged in over zoom?

As usual, there's too much news. The case counts in the US are rising, as they are in some hundred other countries. Trump is holding his rally in Tulsa today, and I have no idea what will be happening in the streets. Barr announced that the lead US attorney at the SDNY is stepping down, and he responded by saying that he isn't doing any such thing, and won't leave until the Senate confirms a replacement.

Carol Lee @carolelee (NBC News Correspondent) NEW: six staffers working on Trump campaign rally in Tulsa have tested positive for coronavirus - campaign stmt says "quarantine procedures were immediately implemented. No COVID-positive staffers or anyone in immediate contact will be at today's rally."

According to Pro Publica, "New Jersey lost 12% of its more than 43,000 residents" (to covid-19). [ That must be referring to nursing homes, right? ]

Barr says Trump authorized the SDNY firing; Trump says he has nothing to do with it.

A judge denied Trump's request to block Bolton's book.

And the unmasked hordes are pouring into the arena in Tulsa to admire Donald Trump and catch covid-19.

I just did a set of PT exercises for the upper back that I found on the web. Seeing the chiropractor doesn't seem to be helping; it's quite possible that my workouts with Ken are harming me, but I don't know. The next step would be seeing my doctor and getting a referral, and I'm not quite ready

for that yet.

The US Attorney, Geoffrey Berman, has agreed to be fired, since Barr has agreed to appoint his deputy. A shameful episode among many others.

The number of new cases of the virus in the US in a day is climbing faster -- the smoothed curve in the NY Times clearly turned up about a week ago. The increase in the number of deaths could take another week or so to turn up, I would guess.

Sunday, June 21

Carl Bergstrom (Biology prof) just posted a nice thread on twitter about the different reasons to test people: for personal health (an individual who fears they may have covid), for population surveillance (to track prevalence), for mitigation (to track the frequently exposed, like front-line workers). He says a lot of confusion in discussions about testing is the result of failure to distinguish which of these purposes is at the center of the discussion.

There's a lot of chatter on twitter (oh, that sounds good) about teens sabotaging the registration process for Trump's rally last night:

[Amanda Tackett @astackett](#) They requested tickets using pet names, aliases, etc. they used messages on tik tok to communicate and deleted the messages within 24 hours. They started about 2 weeks ago. It 1) effed the "data harvest," 2) will indirectly cost the campaign millions in mailers and email, and 1/

And 3) the data corruption will last for years as GOP, candidates, and PAC rely on the lists and never purge them (voter roles in blue states are another matter). Bottom line, a lot a cats and guinea pigs will be get [sic] mail to 123 Main Street...

Apparently one of the groups most cited is the "K-Pop stans," and stan apparently means an obsessive fan. Someone on urban dictionary claims it's a portmanteau of "stalker" and "fan." It can be used as a noun or a verb -- you can stan for someone. It may have been coined, or at least

popularized, by Eminem in 2000. It's not clear to me whether it was already around a few years before his song of that name.

The Trump campaign has their own narrative for the low turnout -- that the media was hysterical and scared people out of going. The Tulsa Fire Marshal says 6200 people attended; the Trump campaign says it was 12000.

Monday, June 22

I did my self-assigned PT this morning, and after lunch, went to the dentist in Madison. It was my first time at Matt Crystal's new location. Their precautions were almost perfect, I thought, though one of the assistants had a hard time keeping her mask on. I'm glad to have that behind me. Now I'll wait a week or so before making an appointment with my eye doctor -- I think that's the only other appointment I cancelled this spring.

I just saw this on twitter: 8 Trump campaign staffers and 2 Secret Service agents involved in that Tulsa rally have now tested positive for coronavirus

The official death toll from covid-19 just exceeded 120,000. I expect the number of deaths to start increasing at some point -- but maybe it'll take a while, because apparently a lot of the new infections are among young people, probably the result of parties and hanging out in bars.

I've been wondering what Beto O'Rourke is up to, and apparently he's registering voters in Texas. Good for him!

Tuesday, June 23

This time, this strange unsettled time, each day provides a powerful reminder not to expect today to be like yesterday.

Filled in my mail-in ballot for the primary early next month, attended the 10:00 Seattle AA meeting, then walked in the neighborhood and picked up trash.

The NYT has an article about where outbreaks are happening now. Jails, prisons, meatpacking plants haven't stopped being a problem, but new



groups and sites are emerging: churches (well, that's not so new); bars, strip clubs, frat parties; a Christian summer camp; hotel and casino employees in Las Vegas; farmworkers; sports teams. Texas reported more than 5,000 new infections today -- yes, in one day.

The virus is really going out of control in several states -- Texas, Arizona, Florida, South Carolina. Somehow no state seems able to learn from the experience of any other state or country. New York and New Jersey didn't learn from Lombardy or from Washington State; the states peaking now didn't learn from New York or New Jersey. Sigh.

Wednesday, June 24

Trump had another (unmasked) indoor event last night -- some three thousand people in Arizona, where the medical system is overwhelmed.

And what happened to California? It was doing so well.

Today the House will interview Justice Department whistleblowers about politically motivated doings under Bill Barr.

It has been clear in the news for the past few days that the people tearing down statues are occasionally pretty indiscriminate -- U.S. Grant, George Washington. They're mad as hell and they may not be focussing their energy with much intelligence. There are a lot of local leaders, I think, but the movement as a whole doesn't have clear leadership. I heard someone say that's protective, because identifiable leaders are vulnerable to assassination or police harassment.

It's been a quiet morning here. I vacuumed and set up the next family zoom; not much else. I have a board meeting at 4.

It's a big day in novel coronavirus history -- the number of new cases in the US is now the highest it has ever been, and still rising. It's a second peak, driven by Arizona, Texas, Florida, California, ...

Thursday, June 25

The California story may be that the early outbreak was in northern California, where people are consequently more careful. The new outbreak is principally in southern California.

The CDC says that ten times more Americans may have been infected than we know -- people have been saying that since March, if I'm not mistaken. By now, that would be 23 million people. Wow.

I set up my 40 envelopes, though I'm not sure how much of the Saturday call I'll be able to attend. (My 3-day tai chi training starts tomorrow and runs through Monday.) I went for a long walk and talked on the phone with Meret while we walked in different places. I planned to take the ferry across the river so we could walk along the east side of the Hudson together, but then realized that the ferry is only running during the morning and evening rush hours.

It's about time to start warming up for my workout with Ken. I'm not sure how many more sessions we have before he leaves for Costa Rica -- maybe one more week.

I'm nearly finished with my crochet project. It's lovely, but I'm not sure how useful it is. Maybe I'll just mail it to Christine and let her figure out what to do with it!

Things don't seem to have changed much since March. Arizona and Texas are having trouble with testing -- not enough test kits, delays in getting results. Hospital capacity is starting to be stretched. The Trump administration has phased out support for some federally funded test sites. At the same time, Texas is trying to get the ACA repealed, which is unbelievably cruel and stupid. Do they <want> to bankrupt their citizens and their hospitals?

Lots of movement today -- a long walk, workout with Ken, tai chi class in the evening.

Friday, June 26

The tai chi Summer Intensive starts today at noon -- 3 hours of qigong and

meditation. .... It was good. My connection was lousy much of the time, but the material was familiar, so it didn't matter so much.

There were 40,000 new covid-19 cases in the US yesterday -- a clear record, and still going up. The EU just said they'd bar travelers from the US and Russia; I don't know which other countries. Texas and Florida are tightening up their rules. So are California and Washington.

The Democratic House voted to grant statehood to Washington, DC, apparently the first time that's happened. If we have a big enough blue wave, please, please, maybe there will be a new state. Imagine that.

Saturday, June 27

The US reported 41K new cases yesterday; the world reported over 180K cases. Insofar as the NYT reporters have been able to determine, 43% of the US deaths from covid-19 have been linked to nursing homes and the like; that includes deaths among the staff. The result for NJ has been almost exactly the same.

David Sedaris in the NYT: "I figured out early on that there's absolutely nothing I can do about this," he said. "That should be obvious, and for some reason it wasn't. I kept thinking, 'I should be able to fix this or control it.' Whenever I feel sorry for myself, I think, 'Everyone in the world is going through this.' That makes it much easier." My thoughts exactly.

This afternoon was the second afternoon of the tai chi Summer Intensive -- for me, it was better than yesterday. I used ethernet instead of wifi, so my zoom connection was better. And there was less introductory material, which is always nice.

The other big news today is that the Trump administration has been aware that Russia is paying bounties to the Taliban for the death of American soldiers stationed there, and has chosen to do nothing about it, not a single thing.

NYT: Some Mississippi ICUs are full. Houston's mayor has said that I.C.U.s there were nearly at capacity.

It looks as though there's been a modest uptick in cases in most NJ counties since the partial reopening began. Cases are increasing the most in Morris and Hunterdon counties, if I read the NYT site correctly -- yet I don't see the increases on the overall map of NJ, perhaps because these counties are less populous? NJ recently announced a bunch of reclassifications of deaths that had not previously been identified as covid-related, but that's unrelated.

I haven't been looking at the world map much -- I've been preoccupied with US data. Latin America looks pretty bad now, with few exceptions. I hear Mexico is in dreadful shape, and we know about Brazil's disaster. I heard an interview with Latin American public health expert, and he singled out Costa Rica as nearly the only country that had managed the pandemic well. Many African countries now have increasing numbers of cases. The NYT shows hot spots in Morocco and the Republic of Congo. Both of these continents were affected later than Europe and the US.

Some of the countries that show declining numbers lack credibility. Pakistan? Russia? Afghanistan? Countries that look pretty good: most of southeast Asia, Australia, most of Europe, the UK, Canada. It's really <everywhere> now.

Sunday, June 28

45K new cases yesterday. Every day sets a new record now.

@daphnekylee: Learned a very relatable term today: “報復性熬夜” (revenge bedtime procrastination), a phenomenon in which people who don't have much control over their daytime life refuse to sleep early in order to regain some sense of freedom during late night hours.

I love that -- I was just thinking yesterday about how I used to have a difficult time getting myself to go to bed on time. I framed it as a battle between an inner teenager and an inner cop, but this is even better.

She adds: Then there are post-covid “revenge buying” and “revenge saving” — everything we do is a revenge nowadays because of our

constantly exacerbated rage

But I don't understand those terms, actually, because the article she links to shows that most people have lost too much money due to lockdowns to have any extra money to buy with or save. I'll have to read some more. CNN Business: 'Several luxury goods companies reported an uptick in China this spring as people emerged from weeks of lockdowns, spurring what some analysts have called a trend of "revenge spending" — the release of pent-up demand once people aren't forced to stay home.' That doesn't help -- why revenge? Maybe Ms. Lee is right about the pent-up rage.

Wow, Mississippi voted to redesign their state flag to eliminate the embedded confederate flag. Wow.

The news about SARS-CoV-2 (I have to look up the capitalization every time) is so dreadful I hardly know what to say. Cases are rising, cases are rising. There must be some good news. We know some things we didn't know three months ago -- vaccines are moving through the pipeline, though we don't know yet how effective they'll be; we're getting clearer about what settings make it easy to transmit the virus -- outdoors is safer than indoors, masking is better, physical distance is better, singing is risky, fomite transmission doesn't seem to be a big factor. There doesn't seem to have been a lot of transmission in all those BLM marches, which seems like a miracle. Oh, and doctors have learned a lot, as Daniel Griffin has been explaining on TWiV. Luckily for us, we don't go to bars and we don't mind avoiding restaurants.

Monday, June 29

I almost wrote "July," because time has so little meaning.

SCOTUS just struck down a Louisiana law requiring doctors who provide abortions to have admitting privileges at a local hospital. That made it impossible for doctors to fly in for the day, a necessary strategy in some areas to protect the lives of the doctors [from human assassins, not from viruses].

Helen Branswell on twitter: A study from New York finds people with HIV who contract [#Covid19](#) do not have worse outcomes than people without HIV. A small bit of Covid good news.

Joyce Alene on twitter: Recap: This weekend we learned Russia was paying Taliban to kill American troops in Afghanistan. Trump was briefed & did nothing. Now, Republicans are doing nothing to bring Trump to account.

Howard Dean on twitter: NPR has a comprehensive story about DeSantis's corruption in Manipulating Covid data and concealing the failure of his administration to deal with Covid. He has a great deal of Florida blood on his hands. Stay out of Florida if you value your health.

The last 3-hour tai chi class took place today, and it sounds as though they're already planning another one in the fall or winter -- good idea. I'll be waiting to learn what regular classes will resume.

Gov Murphy on twitter, showing that he's paying attention: UPDATE: INDOOR DINING WILL NO LONGER RESUME ON THURSDAY. We had planned to loosen restrictions this week. However, after #COVID19 spikes in other states driven by, in part, the return of indoor dining, we have decided to postpone indoor dining indefinitely.

I did something I didn't expect myself to do -- I wrote email to Marc Maron about grief. He's going through a painful loss, the sudden death of his partner, and I've been through a few painful losses -- the death of my father when I was 15, and then being dropped by two partners. Here's what I wrote:

*Following you through this process is deeply touching. I don't listen to every single interview these days, but I never miss your personal update. I have a lot of memories of grief myself -- my father died when I was 15 years old and [I was] completely unequipped for such a seismic event. My only tools were denial and black humor, I think, and I soon picked up a supporting tool: alcohol.*

*I didn't begin to soften and process that grief until more than ten years*

*later, when I began having a series of dreams that allowed me to experience some of my feelings of fear and loss a little bit at a time. I worked on it more intensely a few years later when my partner broke up with me, and going through that grief illuminated the first one. I started to learn to be a lightning rod and just let the pain flow through me. Having a few more years of living under my belt, I could let go of the fear that the pain would destroy me. I could begin to learn some of the things your process reminds me of -- for example, that there's a lot of room between denial and disappearing into the pain. I can put the grief aside for a little while to laugh with a friend without denial or dishonesty -- I know it's still there and it will rise again, but I'll gratefully accept a respite when it's offered.*

*Oh, and I quit drinking and joined AA and got a lot of therapy.*

*I got dumped again ten or fifteen years later, and I was much better at it by then. I had learned more deeply that there's no point in trying to control the grieving process -- there are no rules for how it's going to proceed or how long it's going to take, and the only thing to do is flow with it. It's a lot bigger than my planning mind and not to be messed with.*

*I wish you well. Like you, I hope you hold on to the ways you opened up during your time with Lynn. Actually, I'm confident that you will. We all backslide, and stiffen up, but we don't completely forget.*

*Love,  
Debby*

Andy Slavitt on twitter: The WHO indicates that if the rate of positive tests is above 10%, there are significant unknown cases. RATE: AZ 23.9%, FL 15.5%, NV 15.2%, SC 15.1%, TX 14.9%, AL 13.0%, MS 12.7%, GA 11.9%, UT 11.3%

Wow.

Many of these states are imposing restrictions -- ordering bars, restaurants, gyms, and other businesses to close, requiring masks in some situations, and so on.

Tuesday, July 30

With no classes today, I took a walk along the river this morning, listening to Dr Dave on Shrink Rap Radio interview an English Freudian psychologist about the pandemic.

Dr. Fauci and Dr. Redfield are answering questions before a Senate committee, and I just dropped in to listen for a little while. Apparently he said this earlier: "We are now having 40-plus thousand new cases a day. I would not be surprised if we go up to 100,000 a day if this does not turn around. And so I am very concerned." In Redfield's wrap-up, he refers to decades of underfunding on public health at all levels.

I had my workout with Ken at 4:30. Ken was hoping to leave in a few days for a retreat center in Costa Rica, but just 4 days ago, they postponed their opening and tourists aren't allowed in. He's very disappointed. After the workout, I took a much-needed shower, then cooked a butternut squash for dinner.

At 7:00, the 77 Hudson Board, flanked by attorneys and an insurance company representative, had a zoom meeting to explain to owners why the amenities aren't going to reopen for a while. I don't know that I learned much more than the board had already explained on the Facebook page. It's a very American thing for this kind of decision to be made by lawyers instead of public health experts, but here we are.

I'm watching Rachel Maddow -- I thought it might be safe to watch her before bedtime again, but perhaps not. I'm realizing that I've been distancing myself from the soaring coronavirus numbers in other parts of the country, and she cut through that distance. I don't fault myself, mind you -- I'm all for self-protection.

There's a lot of bad news about the ability to keep up with the need for testing -- long lines, shortages of equipment, overwhelmed testing labs.

The NYT says there are more than 47,000 confirmed new cases today. How many are there really?



Wednesday, July 1

Can it be July? That hardly seems possible.

Because Angie was coming this morning to clean the apartment, Henry and I took off and went to Loantaka Brook Park. It was nice for me to see my old neighborhood -- I worked in locations all over that area, and used to walk in Loantaka a lot. Unfortunately, a thunderstorm started just as we arrived, so we only got to walk for about 20 or 30 minutes, and with umbrellas at that.

After I got home, I ate too much lunch and then sat down to listen to Marc Maron interview Janelle Monae. Now it's time to start roasting vegetables for dinner.

The covid news is as dreadful as can be. Fortunately, quite a few governors are paying attention and are rolling back reopening permission and mandating mask wearing. I think there are only a few total jackass governors out there now.

OK, tons of vegetables roasting in the oven.

Laurie Garrett just tweeted: From [@WHO](#) [@DrTedros](#) "More than 10.3 million cases of [#COVID19](#) have now been reported to WHO and more than 506,000 deaths. For the past week, the number of new cases has exceeded 160,000 on every single day. 60% of all cases so far have been reported just in the past month."

The Associated Press on twitter: "BREAKING: Mayor of Richmond, Virginia, invokes emergency powers to order immediate removal of Confederate statues; work crews begin taking down Stonewall Jackson statue." So good. The Civil War is over, man, and let's make sure the Jim Crow era is over, too.

The total official covid deaths in the US have reached 128K -- twice recently a few thousand new deaths were announced without associated dates. Other than that, deaths have not yet begun to rise despite the steep rise in cases.

Thursday, July 2

There were over 50K new reported cases in the US yesterday, according to some sources. Max Roser of Our World in Data reminds us that there are many other large countries doing whose epidemics are out of control -- Brazil, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia. They are not as rich as the US, so our dysfunction is less excusable.

We hear about the testing rate more frequently now. MSNBC reports that Arizona has a 28.3% positive rate. I don't know how much to trust those numbers, because it seems to me that when it's so hard to get tested, only people who are pretty sure they have covid-19 will go through the rigors of getting tested.

It's been a quiet day. I hardly did anything until about 3:00 or 3:30, when I began to warm up for my workout with Ken. I did my stretches and most of the PT for my back, and did some tai chi and qigong as well.

Twitter, the NYT: The governor of Texas orders most residents to wear masks in public. The mayor of Miami-Dade County announced Thursday on Twitter that he was imposing a curfew from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. until further notice. In Nebraska, state leaders suggested that holiday cookout hosts keep guest lists to make contact tracing easier if there is an outbreak. The Oregon Health Authority warned residents that “the safest choice this holiday is to celebrate at home.” In Arizona, which Mr. Trump visited in May and praised for its reopening plans, Gov. Doug Ducey decided this week to close the state’s water parks and to order bars, gyms and movie theaters to close for 30 days. In Kansas, the state health secretary blamed lax social distancing for his state’s spike and predicted that increases were likely to continue. In Pennsylvania, Gov. Tom Wolf signed an expanded order to wear masks. And in Michigan, where cases have started inching upward again and where more than 100 infections were traced to a single bar, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer ordered bars to cease indoor service again in much of the state.

Watching Maddow: Yet another US Attorney has been removed from his position -- EDNY this time, SDNY previously, and someone in -- was it

Washington? -- a few months ago. Barr's continual undermining of the rule of law. And she's talking about the testing failure in several states -- as I mentioned earlier today, there are now long lines and increasing delays at the test labs. It's yet another example of the ongoing failure of the federal government. (Tonight's theme: yet another, yet another.) Yet again, PPE is going to run out.

Friday, July 3

I saw that the temperature was already 79, so I went out early for a walk -- something I've been thinking of doing for a long time. I picked up trash, and filled my bags in half a block of Sussex, right next to the building. People, people -- there's a trash bin right there, and so many people just ignore it, throwing everything from gloves to bottles to (yes) used diapers right along the street. I listened to TWiV while I walked -- I can't say I understood very much, but the discussion about the emerging vaccines was interesting all the same.

The other day, Henry and I were realizing how many viruses have emerged in our lifetimes -- these are just the ones we've heard of and usually even know a little about -- SARS, MERS, Zika, H1N1, Nipah (had to check the spelling of that one), Ebola, West Nile, HIV, papillomavirus, herpes. Let's see, Lyme Disease is a bacterium. Yellow fever is a virus, but an older one, as is chickenpox. So many!

On twitter: "I'm concerned about voter registration in Mississippi," the election commissioner wrote. "The blacks are having lots (of) events for voter registration. People in Mississippi have to get involved, too." Apparently her only explanation is that she thought she was speaking privately. Jesus Christ.

A ray of light from Stacey Abrams on twitter: Turnout in Georgia's 6/9 primary (final): 1,283,836 Democratic votes, 1,033,308 Republican votes Georgia has changed. Democrats are energized. Republicans are running scared.

The stupid mask wars might be ending. [Again, ha!] Quite a few Republicans have finally spoken in favor of masks -- Rubio, McConnell,

Lamar Alexander, the governor of Texas. Apparently even Sean Hannity said he thinks masks work.

I'm setting up my 40 envelopes for tomorrow while listening to last week's Bugle again. And that all made me forget about going to the 10 am Seattle AA meeting, but now I can go to a 12:15 meeting that usually takes place in Barrow Mansion.

Spent the afternoon loafing around, listening to Marc Maron interview Alan Zweibel about the last 50 years of comedy in the US.

Just read an interesting thread on twitter. Miles Beckett, whoever he is, points out that in Texas and Arizona, where cases and test positivity rates are rising, deaths are also rising. They aren't showing up in the pooled data yet because deaths are still declining elsewhere.

The Times says: *"Four recent polls — including one released this week by Civis Analytics, data science firm that works with businesses and Democratic campaigns — suggest that about 15 million to 26 million people in the United States have participated in demonstrations over the death of George Floyd and others in recent weeks. These figures would make the recent protests the largest movement in the country's history, according to interviews with scholars and crowd-counting experts."*

Don Jr's girlfriend just tested positive for covid-19. We are hearing again about infections about the Secret Service agents. Trump is holding a big party at Mt. Rushmore -- shoulder to shoulder, masks not required. He's apparently preparing to announce that we have to "live with" the virus -- so mission abandoned. Brazil has officially reached 1.5 million cases; we're officially over 2.8 million, with the number of new cases setting a record for three days in a row. Cases are increasing in nearly 40 states, though no state has yet matched the population-weighted cases or deaths in NY and NJ. CT, MA, NY, and NJ still holding steady. Travelers from the US will arriving in England will have to continue quarantining; the EU is still wisely banning us. The Redskins are about to change their name.

July 4, 2020

July 4 is a strange holiday for those of us who don't think the US lives up to its promise for many people. Way back in 1976, I got on a bus in Wisconsin and rode to Philadelphia where we joined in a counter-bicentennial march to state that case. The city routed us through the minority neighborhoods where the networks did not have any cameras rolling, and we heard on the news later that day that the marches had failed to materialize. But they were there all right. The streets were lined with cops in riot gear who were damn sure we were there.

It's been another quiet day. I went to a 10:00 AA meeting. (I found it a little tedious, because it was yet another discussion of the AA concept of a Higher Power. I prefer hearing about people's actual lives.) I talked with Sheree on the phone for a while. I joined the Upper West Side group to finish off my 40 letters for Vote Forward.

The conversation with Sheree made me think about something that SARS-CoV-2 seems to be doing: Some people's lives are being upended. Tina and Ira's son is moving from Brooklyn to Virginia so that his family and go into lockdown with another family and they can home school their children together. This is a big change to make, all in support of their children's education and social lives. That made me think of Bob, who said on the Tai Chi board meeting the other night that he isn't sure he'll be living in New York City next fall -- he's a Feldenkreis teacher and practitioner, and he may not be able to practice his profession. He's not sure what opportunities his wife will have either, or how they'll stay close to their extended family. And then there are all the people who are still missing from our building -- where did they all go? I imagine they either went upstate to second homes or to newly rented homes in more rural or suburban locations, or they went to be with their families -- perhaps they have older parents they wanted to take care of. Will they all come back? No idea.

Someone who lives in Seattle told me that she was struck by how quiet her neighborhood became during the lockdown, and now she knows that she wants to move out of the city so that she can experience that quiet more often. There are anecdotal reports in the NYT occasionally saying that many New Yorkers feel that way as well -- they either want quiet, or more room for their kids, and everybody's afraid of elevators as long as the virus

is still active.

People are making changes that go beyond staying home for a few months -- they're restructuring their lives in ways that might last for years, or might even become permanent.

The news this evening isn't anything too different, but it seems wild nonetheless. Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths increasing in many states; a small spike of cases in Hoboken caused by residents traveling to some of these states; people crowding into lakes and onto beaches; the president preaching his divisive doctrines at large unmasked gatherings in South Dakota and Washington DC; a car plowing into demonstrators in Seattle. It gives me a feeling of building intensity.

On twitter: Ranu Dhillon @RanuDhillon Just finished a stretch in Bay Area hospitals with ~10% of patients with Covid Every Covid+patient was a person of color & either worked at a food processing plant, nursing home, lived w/someone who did or worked at a fast food restaurant w/someone who lived w/someone who did

There were nearly as many new cases yesterday, despite its being a holiday. The 'Clusters' section of the NYT covid coverage shows some absolutely enormous outbreaks -- 2,439 at a prison in Ohio; 1,791 at a second Ohio prison; 1,573 at San Quentin. Jesus.

Sunday, July 5

Schedule: Laundry, Fresh Direct delivery, qigong at noon, family zoom at 4

I'm listening to Dr. Daniel Griffin's report on TWiV. There's been a recent trial of convalescent plasma; it shows no benefit. He continues to be unenthusiastic about remdesivir. The continuing lack of ready access to testing is a real problem. Colleges and universities should do a lot of testing in order to reopen safely, and they're finding it too challenging. About 80% of people have a measurable antibody response; everybody's response declines over time. About a third of people who get covid-19 continue to be sick after some weeks have passed, and tests of lung function and stamina validate their self-reports. There are thousands of "long haulers," people

who are sick as much as 3 much after discharge. Some patients are having good results with NAC, something my naturopath/acupuncturist advised that I take when I'm having lung congestion. People respond well to NSAIDs as well, despite an early warning from French doctors that they should be avoided. Thrombo-embolic complications continue -- clots, I guess, in various locations. They're not using famotidine, hydroxychloroquine, antibiotics. They are using steroids, and even aspirin. Professional athletes are very concerned, as Henry and I have been hearing on the news. Lasting lung damage and muscle weakness could end their careers, and they're paying attention.

Qigong was good. I'm glad Greg is continuing to offer it. After lunch, I did most of my self-invented PT for the upper back, and then it was time to start up the family zoom.

Monday, July 6

From an article in the NYT entitled "The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus": *The focus on comorbidities "makes me angry, because this really is about who still has to leave their home to work, who has to leave a crowded apartment, get on crowded transport, and go to a crowded workplace, and we just haven't acknowledged that those of us who have the privilege of continuing to work from our homes aren't facing those risks," said Dr. Mary Bassett, the Director of the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University.*

Evan facetimed me today for the first time in a while, and we spent an hour or so tooling around the world of Roblox -- building our pizza factories, creating our labs in the arctic. It was good to play.

It's so hot that I'm disinclined to go outside, even though I haven't been out for a few days. Some rain seems to be moving in, and that will give us a more pleasant day tomorrow.

I'm listening to one of Brené Brown's podcasts, and she just said that shame-proneness and addiction are so intertwined that we don't even know which comes first. Anything she has to say about shame is interesting to me.

Instead of going outside, I did some tai chi and then did my stretching and my PT for the upper back. Then I started a batch of bean soup. While it cooks, I'm still catching up on podcasts and preparing my envelopes for tomorrow. This American Life has some good episodes about the Black Lives Matter issues and activities.

Keisha Lance Bottoms, the mayor of Atlanta, just tweeted that she has tested positive for the virus, though she has no symptoms. I hope she remains asymptomatic.

Bolsonaro has covid symptoms and will be tested again, and I'm afraid cannot extend any good wishes to him; numerous members of the Mississippi House are confirmed to have covid.

A doctor from Johns Hopkins just said on MSNBC that he doubts the theory that aerosolization is a significant transmission mode for the SARS-CoV-2, because the spread we're seeing now is different from the spread of diseases known to spread that way, and he named measles as an example. I'm not sure he had time to fully explain himself, but in any case he thought this debate would go on for some time.

It's just an infuriating and heartbreaking fact by now that the executive branch of the federal government gave up fighting the virus -- never even tried, really. They have denied that the virus is a serious threat, they have passed the buck to the states, they have claimed that it has been defeated. It's a limited toolbox and entirely about trying to ignore or spin the facts on the ground. The majority of Americans beg to differ, and I hope to hell they vote.

Tuesday, July 7

I'm at the Seattle AA meeting today; haven't been here in a while.

Deaths from covid-19 have officially passed 130,000.

I've mentioned the pain I have in my upper back since February -- it's still here, and I think I'll have to see a doctor about it eventually. I need to get



some dental work taken care of first -- my dentist says I need to get a crown replaced, and it's no surprise that I could get an appointment with virtually no delay. I go tomorrow.

I woke up having an anxious dream about an old woman who might be getting Alzheimer's Disease, and who was being taken advantage of in some way by a smooth-talking guy.

What else is on today's schedule? Letter-writing at 1:30; Ken at 4. Maybe I'll take a walk after the meeting.

A good cleanup walk -- 1 large bag, 2 small bags, and a few things that didn't fit, like a box and an umbrella. Ken postponed the workout at the last minute, but I was ready, so I went ahead. That makes me glad, because I've been more inert lately.

*Various tweets: Bolsonaro tested positive. The Trump administration has officially notified the UN of its withdrawal from WHO. (Though someone else says they can't do that without Congress.) Forty-three hospital ICUs in 21 Florida counties have hit capacity and show zero beds available. What "works" means for a vaccine— how long & for whom is less clear. But probably more like a flu vaccine (40%?) vs MMR (97%). The monoclonal antibody therapy is also very exciting. Maybe even more so than a vaccine. If you get infected, it's another way to confer immunity & prevent it from advancing. T-cells more important and less understood than antibodies.*

Maddow last night: 10 out of 12 hospitals in Texas's Rio Grande Valley are full. Austin, San Antonio, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Houston -- hospitals getting full or even beyond full. Arizona leadership appealed to the feds for help with their testing needs, and were told that "FEMA is getting out of the testing business." Mexico is hardening its border with the US.

So many countries have been doing a good job -- so many! And this very rich country has completely botched the job.

Wednesday, July 8

Darn it, the primary has already been called for Sires; Hector Oseguera got less than a quarter of the votes. Maybe next time. (Only 24% of the votes have been counted, so the numbers can still shift, though the winner is unlikely to change.)

The number of covid-19 cases in the US has passed three million, over a million of which have come in the last 30 days. It's a funny number to use, in a way, because of course many of those people have recovered by now, but it's a useful number for comparing countries. There have been over 131,000 deaths: a number with a clearer meaning. And the number of deaths yesterday was a jump -- we haven't seen a number that high in a month. Maybe deaths are about to start catching up to the rising cases.

Texas Tribune: "An increase in people dying at home suggests coronavirus deaths in Houston may be higher than reported / In Houston, one of the nation's fastest-growing coronavirus hot spots, more residents are dying before they can make it to a hospital. Medical examiner data shows that an increasing number of these deaths are the result of COVID-19." That's exactly what happened in New York -- and in Detroit and Boston, the article says. It includes a plot showing that the number of people dying each day of cardiac arrest before paramedics arrive is usually between, say, 180 and 230, but now it's nearly 300 -- and rising.

I went back to the dentist this morning to get a crown replaced. I was very nervous about it, and focussing on accepting my fear and dread. Fear of covid-19 makes it worse, of course. I listened to a dharma talk during the worst part, and it was very helpful. It wasn't that bad, finally -- the dentist was generous with the novocaine, which still hasn't worn off, and I didn't have to hold my mouth in an extremely awkward position, either. I hope it doesn't feel bad when the novocaine wears off, and I'm glad I could get it done. It's tricky getting medical care during a pandemic, that's for sure.

Andy Slavitt on twitter: "BREAKING: Supreme Court sides with Trump & allows employers to deny coverage for contraception under the ACA under religious grounds. Another step backwards for equality, justice & health." The bastards.

Governor Murphy just issued an order requiring masking up when

outdoors, where social distancing cannot be maintained. With NJ's numbers creeping up, we've been wondering what he would do.

Trump is insisting that schools have to reopen, but not offering any assistance, just noise and threats.

The CDC issued guidelines for school reopening; Trump attacked the guidelines; the CDC will issue new ones. This is a huge issue, but I admit I haven't been following it closely.

There seems to be quite a surge in Tulsa now, 18 days after Trump's event there. I wonder if we'll hear from attendees. There were demonstrations at around the same time, and there were some social events, too, for Juneteenth.

Our World in Data ([ourworldindata.org](http://ourworldindata.org)) shows a record number of new cases for today -- 57,473. Deaths -- 1,174, not a record, but an increase. I'm not sure if their counts are exactly the same as those in the NYT, but I'll see tomorrow.

I attended the Hoboken women's AA meeting this evening, and went to the business meeting afterward. They're working out how to hold meetings once the church allows them to. There's a lot to figure out -- how to stay within the capacity limits for the room (ask people to volunteer to be bumped if capacity would be exceeded by a newcomer or someone whose sobriety feels shaky), whether to require masks (yes), whether to have a hybrid meeting -- in person plus zoom (yes), whether to allow snacks (no), what to do about literature (people need to bring their own books or have the text on their smart phones), and more. It was a well-run meeting, and I'm grateful for the remote option. I'm probably the oldest person in most of the NJ groups I've been attending.

Thursday, July 9

From the National Geographic: What we feared is now happening — pandemic-induced poaching is way up in Uganda with the collapse of ecotourism. Lions, giraffes, and even a silverback gorilla are casualties.

And the NYT reports a higher number of new cases yesterday -- maybe more data came in after ourworldindata.org reported theirs. 59,453. Deaths still elevated, but not as high as ourworldindata.org: 948.

Here's a nice tweet: *It's nice having these Never Trump Republicans riding shotgun because they have a taste for the jugular most of us Democrats lack.* They really are releasing some ferocious ads, and it lets Biden continue to look like a nice guy while they are out for blood.

Oh boy: *BREAKING: The Supreme Court rules that there is no higher standard for issuing a criminal subpoena to a president, meaning Trump cannot stop a NY subpoena for his records that reason, dealing a blow to Trump and DOJ's executive authority arguments.* The case is kicked back down to a lower court, so it won't be resolved quickly, but as Ted Lieu just said, "The Supreme Court in #TrumpTaxReturns case just crushed Bill Barr's radical view that [@realDonaldTrump](#) is the law. Barr's legacy will be the reckless politicization of [@TheJusticeDept](#) and the shrinking of the power of the presidency due to multiple losses in federal courts.

And what will I do today? I did the vacuuming before even having my morning tea, which is very unusual for me! I'm trying to balance several things I want to add to my schedule -- qigong classes, AA meetings (especially agnostic meetings), texting for Open Progress -- along with the things I'm already doing. I also want to wash the inside of the windows now that the outside has been cleaned. And I do like to have a lot of empty time. Hmm. I need to spend some time with the calendar.

Lt. Cl. Vindman, who testified so memorably in the Trump impeachment hearings, has retired from the military. He cites bullying, intimidation, and retaliation. It's yet another national disgrace.

This is a political journal just about as much as a covid journal, isn't it? For me, it's impossible to have it otherwise.

Trump has been waging war on mail-in voting, and this is now having the effect of discouraging Republican voters, who tend to be older, from using that option. Some Republican officials are now becoming concerned that this will give them a disadvantage in the 2020 election, and starting to send

conflicting communications to their voters encouraging them to vote by mail. Sheesh.

(I'm going back and forth between twitter, a bit of Chris Hayes, and Rachel Maddow.)

Maddow is moving from state to state where hospitals are being overwhelmed by covid -- Texas, Arizona, Florida. In Mississippi, the number of infected (Republican) lawmakers has risen to 26. That's about 1 in 6, according to the Mississippi newspaper. There are 10 additional linked cases. The governor is now warning the public that if they have been in contact with any legislator or member of the legislative staff, they should get tested. Getting tested, of course, is often a nightmare. We're seeing the mayor of Arizona begging for help with testing, with a positive rate of over 25% and sick people waiting in line for over 8 hours to be tested.

[Kim Sue @DrKimSue](#) "47% of the San Quentin population is COVID19 positive. This is about policy saving lives. The structural violence and racism of the prison system = perfect storm for COVID. Decarcerate NOW." The largest known clusters in the country are in prisons.

In southern California, covid patients are being transferred by helicopter to northern California for treatment. Are patients then being billed for the flights? I wonder.

I don't know this guy, but I think this is such an important point:

[James Palmer @BeijingPalmer](#) "*the single most consequential factors in shaping the moralism of Americans under <40 were the failure to hold anyone accountable for Iraq, and the failure to hold anyone accountable for 2008. If the same happens again with Trumpism, the backlash will be beyond imaginable.*" I think a lot of the anger in this country goes back to the economic crash, because all the penalties were paid by citizens and none by bankers.

Apparently I haven't noted that there's some evidence that taking a statin provides some protection from SARS-CoV-2. There have been two retrospective studies (China and Belgium, maybe?) showing that people on statins have done better. (There may be some random controlled trials

happening -- I should check [clinicaltrials.gov](http://clinicaltrials.gov). Yes, Spain; London; Nigeria and Pakistan; Cambridge, MA.) One point for Henry and me, who have been taking statins for years.

BCG is one of the old vaccines (against TB) that people thought might provide protection against covid; a new paper says no. I wonder if there's an investigation of MMR in the works -- and yes, I see there's a trial under way in Egypt.

I finished the day by doing my stretches, then my back and shoulder exercises; setting up 40 envelopes while watching the news; teaching a tai chi class; then listening to Preet Bharara interview Cyrus Vance on the Stay Tuned podcast. They were both optimistic that this is "an inflection point" with respect to how African Americans will be treated by the criminal justice system. I hope so.

Friday, July 10

[Laurie Garrett @Laurie\\_Garrett](#): "[@WHO](#) finally amended it's [sic] official assessment of how [#SARSCoV2](#) is spread. Yes, it's microscopic droplets that linger suspended in enclosed airspaces so, yes, you can catch it in a restaurant, bar, jail cell, cocktail party..." They also acknowledged more clearly that asymptomatic and presymptomatic people can spread the virus. Apparently they're still debating the significance of aerosols vs fomites as a transmission path.

Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel: "You cannot fight the pandemic with lies and disinformation any more than you can fight it with hate or incitement of hatred. The limits of populism and denial of basic truths are being laid bare."

[Hannah Ritchie @HannahRitchie](#): In the last day the world saw largest number of daily confirmed cases so far in this pandemic. – US added almost 59k confirmed cases – Brazil almost 45k – India almost 25k

According to the NYT, there was another new peak in US cases yesterday, 59,886. Deaths: 842. "At least six states set single-day case records on Thursday: Alabama, Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Oregon and Texas. And at

least two states recorded their highest death totals for a single day: Florida, with 120, and Tennessee, with 22."

Despite all this dreadful news, I was very cheerful yesterday. It was one of those days when I say to Henry, "We were made for lockdown!" I had enough physical activity (exercise, housecleaning, tai chi), enough social activity (AA meeting, tai chi class), and of course plenty of diversion (crossword puzzles, Words With Friends, crocheting -- I started a new potholder/trivet). The AA meeting I went to was one of the secular NY meetings, and there was a woman there from Seattle with one day sober. I gave her my phone number, and then fantasized about becoming her sponsor -- it seems to be something I want!

With a big storm coming, I decided I'd better take a walk before it hit, so I just went back and forth between the pier and the Colgate clock a few times, and came in when the first raindrops started. Tropical Storm Fay is coming our way. The storm is heading north, but the wind was blowing south -- go figure.

It's been a quiet afternoon, watching the storm, listening to podcasts, hovering over twitter too much for my own good. I just watched a video for Why We All Vote, a training I couldn't attend last night. I'm still trying to figure out if there's anything useful I can do with them, as an older person who's still staying pretty locked down. I might be better off doing some more texting for Open Progress.

Donald Trump just commuted Roger Stone's sentence. Jesus. I have mixed feelings about watching Chris Hayes because his tone of outrage is usually too much for me, but tonight it sounds good to me.

Apparently the PCR tests everywhere are being delayed, not just, as we've heard, in Arizona and Texas. It's the same national chains, and they're overwhelmed everywhere.

There were more than 65,000 new cases today; more than 70,000 according to some sources. The April numbers have been outpaced many times now. The new increases are coming from nearly 40 states. And keep in mind that the tests reported today were probably done many days

ago.

The states that peaked in April -- NY, NJ, CT, MA -- are still holding steady. Hang tight, neighbors.

Saturday, July 11

I went to bed angry, but still slept very well. Maybe it made me feel better to donate another \$200 to flip the Senate.

On twitter this morning: Based on this autopsy study (in the Lancet), it looks like anosmia is due to inflammation of the nerves at the level of the nose rather than in the brain.

From expressnews.com, a local Texas newspaper: A doctor and Hidalgo County health authority, said -- "Three cases this week - (a) child infected both parents - both parents dead. My own personal patients," he said in the briefing streamed online. "This is not a conspiracy theory. This is the absolute truth." We don't know the age of the children -- young adults, perhaps.

[Scott Gottlieb, MD @ScottGottliebMD](#) Florida is now reporting hospitalization data where the primary cause of admission is Covid. Currently there are 51,000 Americans hospitalized with Covid. At the peak of the epidemic's first wave, centered in New York in April, there were about 60,000 Americans Hospitalized.

Worldwide, nearly 1.5 million cases were confirmed last week alone.

I took an early walk, to get out before it became too hot or too thunderstormy. It was still awfully hot, even along the river, and I came back damp and ready for breakfast. Then the 10:00 women's AA meeting. Now I just hung up from the upper west side letter-writing session, where they do love to talk, and now it's time to get ready for my workout, which was rescheduled from Thursday. Anything else today? Nothing else scheduled.

It looks as though there were more than 60,000 cases again today.



I ended the day by watching Moonstruck and crocheting. Henry was hanging out in his office, either on the computer or watching some action series on Netflix -- also on the computer.

The news about the spread of the virus, and about the corruption of our government, is always sitting like big lumps in my stomach. Always.

Sunday, July 12

And yes, it was hard to fall asleep last night. I worried more about Republican malfeasance than the virus, but it could easily have gone the other way. Thank you to Gil Fronsdal for helping me settle my mind.

After listening to a couple of episodes of the Bugle to lighten up, I find that there's a new episode of TWiV with Daniel Griffin's clinical update. As expected, he reports improvements in treatment, delays in getting test results. He reports a case of a man who had covid 4 months ago, recovered enough to donate plasma, but is now PCR positive again and sicker than the first round. Is this a lingering case or a new case? Either way, it's very disturbing. Ivermectin (FDA approved for parasitic illness) is being used in South America to treat covid, but there are not yet studies to justify that use.

Monoclonal antibodies have to be given early, and they have to be given intravenously -- that's a tricky combination of requirements. It reminds me of remdesivir.

Set up my 40 envelopes for Tuesday while listening, and now I'm logging in to my qigong class.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/madhukarpai/2020/04/22/a-skeptics-guide-to-ecologic-studies-during-a-pandemic/>

From the article: *If you torture the data long enough, you can come up with an infinite number of correlations linking all sorts of factors with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. My previous post was an effort to dissect the limitations of ecologic studies on [BCG and COVID-19](#), but there many other such correlations floating around. Age, use of face masks by the public,*

*MMR vaccine, influenza vaccine, malaria endemicity, warm weather, ABO blood group, air pollution, smoking, vaping, 5G network towers, ibuprofen, vitamin D, you name it.*

*Many of these correlations are derived from quick and dirty, large-scale, cross-country comparisons. Epidemiologists like me call them '[ecologic studies](#)' (also referred to as 'ecological studies'). These studies, in particular, should come with a clear warning, as they are prone to many biases, and can confuse the public, the media and policy makers.*

I'm saving that link because I think I'll want to send this article to people from time to time. And this is the "previous post" he refers to.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/madhukarpai/2020/04/12/bcg-against-coronavirus-less-hype-and-more-evidence-please/>

Monday, July 14

I did a cleanup walk this morning, and collected quite a lot of trash. I came home drenched with sweat, tired, and ready for lunch.

I half-attended a tai chi workshop, but it was too slow and meditative for me. I laid on the bed and listened to the first part, and that was actually lovely.

And now what for the rest of the afternoon? A podcast or two, some of my back exercises -- then suddenly a call from Fran, a fellow teacher in the NYC tai chi school. She's concerned about what we're going to do in the fall, and wants that conversation to start soon.

My lentil stew is now cooking, and I'm catching up with the news. Gavin Newsom is shutting things down again in California -- bars, restaurants, and so forth; Oregon is also rolling back its reopening. Los Angeles and San Diego have already decided that teaching will be online in the fall. Case numbers are rising in Mexico -- it now has the most in the world. Small businesses are being destroyed.

When I was talking with Fran earlier, I told her that I've been pretty passive about the school, and that I feel as though my priorities are self-care and

political work. I didn't know I thought that until it came out of my mouth, but there it was. Of course I skipped how much time I spend watching, reading, and listening to the news -- maybe that's why I need to much self-care, because the news is so infuriating, depressing, and frightening.

Another reason, probably, that I am so disengaged from my tai chi school is that Henry and I are on the waiting list for a senior community near Princeton. I don't see how I'll be able to continue teaching after we move down there, though I can imagine driving up for class in Soho on Sundays.

I just attended a new secular AA meeting in Toronto. It was big -- I forget how many people, but it took three zoom pages. The leader, Joe C, has apparently written one of the popular secular AA books, so some people seemed to think he was a sort of guru, but that was the only odd note. Otherwise, it was a lovely, diverse collection of people and the readings were a relief. I'll be back.

From the NYT: 5.4 million people have lost their health insurance because they lost their jobs.

Watching Chris Hayes. Atlanta and Nashville have also announced that their schools won't reopen. Senator Doug Jones is on talking about a bill he's proposing to give financial support to schools so that they can open safely.

Tuesday, July 14

Letter-writing call at 1:30, workout at 4. Do I take a walk this morning? Maybe so -- it's not going to be as hot today!

Yes, just back from a walk. I didn't pick up trash today, so I could walk farther -- the park circuit I sometimes do, with variations: up to Van Vorst Park, then a couple of blocks farther, then north to Hamilton Square, and back via the Newark Ave pedestrian area and Grove St. I hadn't noticed before that Grove St is now a one-way street to make room for outdoor dining. There are a couple of big areas for outdoor dining on Newark Ave, and I saw a few people doing workouts on the little spur off Newark Ave -- is it Barrow or Bay? I'm not sure. I wonder if anybody's doing outdoor

haircuts over there!

And I definitely confirmed something I've noticed before -- my stomach is very unsettled when I'm outside, telling me that I'm scared. It's almost embarrassing, because I'm scared even when nobody is within half a block of me and there's zero risk of infection. I did some calming breathing -- in for a count of four, hold for four, out for eight. It's helpful, but not completely.

So that explains why I need so much self-care, and why I'm going to all these AA meetings. I'm carrying around a low level of fear all the time -- between the virus and Trumpism, I don't know where safety lies.

On twitter: New [#covid19](#) paper in Annals of Hematology: "Blood type is not associated with risk of progression to severe disease requiring intubation or causing death."

Mick Mulvaney, Trumpster and former chief of staff, wrote an op-ed about how bad testing is. He helped us get to where we are.

More and more Republicans are saying that they won't attend the convention in Florida.

England is going to require masks in stores -- what took them so long?

I showed Henry how to use zoom! He must be one of the last people to start zooming, and the Visions board of directors is going to use it for their meeting later today.

I signed in to my Tuesday zoom session and finished off 40 more letters, then warmed up for my session with Ken. I'll do a few more things before I quit.

I mentioned my anxiety to Ken, and he told me a very tough story, about his brother who is mentally ill in the care of the state. He's in a tough place because his medication was good for his brain but bad for his body, and now he's unstable while they try to find a replacement. Ken is his guardian, and he said that the pandemic is making any bureaucratic problem much

more difficult to disentangle. He didn't tell me that to belittle me for being anxious when I have no real problems, but it's a good reminder nonetheless. Even if Trump wins again, which God forbid, I won't be the first to suffer.

Data keeps pouring in that masking works. I absolutely don't need convincing at this point.

The administration backed down from its threat that foreign students could not stay in the country if their schools did not fully open for in-person learning.

The Phase I trial of the Moderna vaccine went well.

Wonderful tweet, and wonderful, honest responses: [Laura Helmuth @laurahelmuth](#) "When does the sadness hit you the hardest? For me, it's on the way home from the grocery store. I can concentrate long enough to shop but break down on the way home. And what about the fear or the anger?" When I think about how I don't know when I'll be able to visit my country again and see my friends—if at all; An empty campus at the start of Spring during the final weeks of the semester feels strange & sad. ; On the drive to work, and then I'm drained when I'm trying to start my day. Its not ideal. Hang in there.; Usually around midnight, when I start to feel sleepy but the mental monologue is just getting warmed up, kicking me awake again; Anytime I try to think more than a week into the future; Unpredictable waves. The fear is usually at night. The anger has clung to me much, much longer than I thought I had the capacity or energy for.; I am never not angry.; for me the grief hits hardest when out walking in the woods near home. I look at the drying-up creek, the ragged brown trees, and then a still-wild chorus of coyote howls and hermit thrushes cracks me open ...; It's the way that grief has hit me in the past out of the blue. But often after food shopping, when I can let go of the hypervigilance and give in to the emotional exhaustion.; It's unpredictable. I felt sad and guilty this morning looking at my 401k statement. It gained 20% in a quarter. I have a job, savings, a roof over my head, can afford little conveniences like takeout dinner while 40 million people are out of jobs and many lost healthcare.; and so on and so on.

We heard a while ago about the infected Missouri hairstylist, and the results were published today. There were two, apparently, and it's reported on the CDC site like this: "Among 139 clients exposed to two symptomatic hair stylists with confirmed COVID-19 while both the stylists and the clients wore face masks, no symptomatic secondary cases were reported; among 67 clients tested for SARS-CoV-2, all test results were negative. Adherence to the community's and company's face-covering policy likely mitigated spread of SARS-CoV-2." On twitter: "not all clients agreed to PCR testing (72/139 did not), but all were contacted and followed for 14 days--> none reported developing any symptoms"

NYT: Florida breaks its record for most deaths in a day, and Texas and Arizona are readying refrigerated morgue trucks.

Wednesday, July 15

From an article in the NYT today about virus transmission: "In the 1980s, researchers in Wisconsin [dosed a group of male volunteers with rhinovirus](#), which causes the common cold, and sat them down for 12 hours of poker with their healthy counterparts. Some of the recipients, who were susceptible to new infections, were given large, plastic collars or arm restraints that kept them from touching their faces." Oh man, I want to see pictures of that setup. The article seems to say that we may have misunderstood the relative importance of droplet/aerosol transmission and fomites for other viruses as well -- masking and ventilation may be more important than cleaning surfaces and washing hands.

Here's good news for Liberty State Park: [David Cruz @CruzNJTV](#)  
BREAKING: [#PaulFireman](#) backs off expanding golf course to Caven Point. "I will not be used as an excuse for inaction any longer ... I am halting any efforts to pursue a public private partnership at Caven Point" He says "minority communities" have been ignored. More on this later

I can't imagine what he's talking about when he says the park is an example of ignoring minority communities. Who does he think uses the park??

Henry and I went to Liberty State Park ourselves this morning, because

Angie was coming to clean the apartment. We parked in the hospital lot so we could walk across the pedestrian bridge and locate a particular field or lawn Henry had seen in a picture on the web -- it turned out to be behind LSP, where the windmill is, and the windmill turns out to be a weather station.

*Washington Post: Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt (R) told reporters on Wednesday that he has tested positive for the coronavirus. He said he has experienced only mild symptoms and will continue working from home while self-isolating. Stitt said he is not considering issuing a statewide mandate to wear masks, though he had previously encouraged that Oklahomans wear them in public.*

From an article in the Jerusalem Post: "Nahmias and tenOever spent the last three months studying what SARS-CoV-2 is doing to human lung cells. What they found is that the novel [coronavirus](#) prevents the routine burning of carbohydrates, which results in large amounts of fat accumulating inside lung cells – a condition the virus needs to reproduce." They found that a drug called Fenofibrate (Tricor), used to lower HDL and triglycerides, causes the cells to burn fat. This, I assume, is only in the lab so far; animal and human tests will follow. It seems consistent with reports I've seen that statins (some statins, anyway) are protective against the virus.

One thing that has changed since I last attended AA meetings is that people text now more than we talk on the telephone. I'm surprised, though I shouldn't be, to have had two pleasant interactions with women from meetings over Messages.

The case count in the US just hit 3.5 million. The <official> case count, mind you. What's the real count? 30 million?

*Also: Drug deaths have risen an average of 13 percent so far in 2020 compared with last year, according to mortality data collected by The New York Times.*

I don't think I've mentioned the wonderful term "doomscrolling." Its meaning is fairly obvious -- paging endlessly through the bad news. I probably do too much of it.

Thursday, July 16

The mask wars continue. Increasingly, governors are finally issuing mask orders, and companies are announcing that they will require masks (Walmart, for instance). However, Brian Kemp has nullified local mask orders throughout Georgia.

The NYT reports a new record number of new cases: 68,308. The number of deaths is still far below its peak when the northeast was drowning in the SARS-CoV-2, but it's been above 950 for the last two days. Maybe it won't climb as high as the first peak since treatment has improved so much.

Worldwide, we're over 13.5 million cases; 584K new ones just yesterday. Multiply by ten? Twenty?

I woke up having an anxious dream that the FBI or CIA had just confiscated all my belongings because they suspected my partner (Martin? Henry?) of having been a spy. I had no laptop, no phone, no computer, no id, no keys, nothing. I just hung around their office because I couldn't figure out how to go anywhere else. Henry suggests that a trigger might be that we had to leave the apartment yesterday when Angie came, and now we're leaving again this morning so Paolo can service our HVAC units. Who knows?

I'm listening to Michael Mina on TWiV arguing for quick tests with lower sensitivity (I had written lower accuracy, but Mina just tweeted, saying that's a misunderstanding) than the ones in use. He says their accuracy is good when someone's viral load is high, when they're at their most infectious, and if the tests are cheap and easy (as they can be -- a \$1 spit test is possible), they can be repeated every day and few cases will be missed. He's very convincing.

Henry and I took a walk together this morning. We had to be out of the apartment for an hour or so to allow for our HVAC units to be serviced, and luckily, the weather was lovely.

I didn't get up to much today -- a workout with Ken at 4.



The COVID Tracking Project publishes their daily data every afternoon. (The NYT numbers don't always agree.) Today's update: [The COVID Tracking Project @COVID19Tracking](#) Our update is published. States reported a record number of tests (831k) and cases (71k). At 977, the reported death count is the highest since May 29. Patients hospitalized with COVID-19 rose to a level we haven't seen since April 23.

"The Supreme Court has ruled that Florida can enforce a law barring ex-felons from voting if they still owe court fines or fees that they are unable to pay associated with their convictions." I agree with Joe Biden, who calls it a poll tax. Disgraceful.

T'ai Chi class in a few minutes; printing the next batch of 40 letters while I wait.

Boy, Thursdays are good movement days -- walking, strength training, tai chi.

There's a report out of Florida that a high percentage of kids who are tested for the virus are testing positive, and that they show signs of lung damage. It's a bit sketchy, though, so it's hard to know what to make of it until we hear more.

Friday, July 17

The NYT numbers are in, and they report almost 76K cases yesterday. Perhaps more cases came in after the COVID Tracking Project reported. Either way, that's quite a jump. The northeastern states are still holding steady, and hopefully this news will encourage us to continue wearing masks and distancing.

NYT: Two-thirds of the 230,000 new cases that were reported worldwide on Wednesday came from just four countries — the United States, Brazil, India and South Africa — which are all failing to contain enormous, fast-moving epidemics.

Bloomberg has more this morning on covid in kids: *While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has long maintained on [its website](#) that*

*those younger than 18 make up only [2% of cases](#), state data paints a much less rosy picture. California and Mississippi, for instance, are recording rates nearing 10% of overall cases. Florida has found that about [a third of all children tested there](#) are infected.*

It may be because kids are now less likely to be sheltering at home, or perhaps before kids are more likely to be tested, now that testing is more often available to the asymptomatic. Oh, and here's another reason: *Age data collected from state health departments by Bloomberg shows that the oldest Americans now represent a lower percentage of infections than they did at the start of the outbreak. The surge in recent cases is led by the group most likely to have school-aged children, those in their 20s, 30s and up to their 50s in some states.*

We still know very little about the damage it does to children, or how likely they are to spread it to one another or to adjacent adults.

I haven't been making many notes about the economy, but we're heading for a catastrophe: Nearly 12 million U.S. adults live in households that missed their last rent payment, and 23 million have little or no confidence in their ability to make the next one, according to Census Bureau data. <https://on.wsj.com>

[Max Roser @MaxCRoser](#) According to [@youyanggu](#)'s estimates more than 300,000 Americans are getting infected with COVID-19 every day. (Due to limited testing only 77,000 cases get confirmed). If the estimate is correct this means more than 2 million infections every week now. <http://covid19-projections.com>

There's a Florida fund that pays court costs for ex-felons wanting to register to vote. I'm trying to make a donation through my charitable giving account.

Wow, Fauci's on TWiV.

Q: How do you think about the causes of transmission now? Droplet, aerosol? A: His best guess is still that most transmission is due to droplets, but he can't rule out aerosols. Transmission via surfaces is a bit of a

mystery as well.

Q: How long are people infectious? They continue to be PCR positive for a long time. A: Now we estimate that if the cycle threshold is above 35, they're almost surely not infectious; it's just dead virus particles being detected.

Q: What do you think the fraction of transmission comes from asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic people? A: I like these questions, because there's no wrong answer -- we really don't know! But there has to be a considerable amount of a- or pre- transmission -- look at the Teddy Roosevelt aircraft carrier example.

Q: Are children transmitting virus? A: We're in a data-free zone. Studies are underway, and we should know the answer to this question soon.

Q: How can we open schools in a safe way? A: We know that we want to get kids back in school. It varies greatly where you are -- some regions have high infection rates, others do not. He listed a few things, but didn't go into detail.

(And now I have to go to the doctor to get blood drawn.)

I listened to the rest. He said they're prioritizing research into medications or treatments that would help keep a sick person from needing to go to the hospital. A couple of other questions he's interested in are whether there's a difference in the immune response of a person who has just had respiratory illness and another person who had more systemic illness; and whether the virus really does travel throughout the body, which he said could be answered by ongoing autopsy studies.

Shit, RBG has cancer again. She's been getting treatment since May 19

My tai chi class at 1:00 was nice.

I've been setting up envelopes like crazy -- the 40 I planned to do tomorrow, and then a new 40 because Vote Forward is doing some experiments in Florida.

Now I'm at a secular AA meeting in Montreal. I tried one in Madison, WI, and another one in Toronto, but neither of those links was any good. This meeting was funny. It was small, and people took that as license to be very rambly and unfocussed. I'm not sure I was any better. :^)

Trump is bored of the coronavirus: Jake Tapper @jaketapper Trump adviser tells WaPo that when it comes to the pandemic, the president is "not really working this anymore. He doesn't want to be distracted by it. He's not calling and asking about data. He's not worried about cases."

DHS agents (apparently) are arresting people on the streets of Portland, and throwing them into unmarked vans. Where are they being taken? The mayor, the governor, the senators -- everybody wants them the hell out of there. Their excuse is that people have been painting graffiti on federal buildings. It's shocking. It's like having a genuine massive secret police force.

Saturday, July 18

"Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Do not become bitter or hostile. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble. We will find a way to make a way out of no way." -Rep. John Lewis

Everybody I admire is pouring out their love and respect for John Lewis. Several people have suggested renaming the Edmund Pettus bridge after him, and that would be perfectly fitting. Maybe more things will be named after him as well. "John Lewis has been so important for so long that the first person to write his obituary, Roy Reed (listed as a contributor in tonight's obit), left the New York Times in 1978 and died in 2017."

My regular letter-writing session isn't happening today, so I found a new one to sign up for. This one's based in Orlando, which is fitting for today, because I'm writing letters to Florida for the Vote Forward experiment. And I'm out of envelopes! New ones are due to arrive on Wednesday.

According to one report, Portland's protests grew a lot last night in

response to the behavior of the anonymous federal troops. People can be so brave and wonderful!

Over 70K confirmed cases again -- are these the cases that were tested 2 weeks ago? How bad are the testing delays? (covidtracking.com shows 77,233 new cases, another record). 902 deaths (NYT); 951 (covidtracking.com).

I went for a walk before breakfast -- my little park circuit, Van Vorst to Hamilton then back home. I felt the same dread and anxiety arise, and I started remembering the guided meditation we did during the tai chi training. Mark had us visualize guardians in the four compass directions -- a green dragon in a green forest to the east, a white tiger in the snow-covered mountains to the west (should be a snow leopard, but never mind :^), a phoenix in the sun the south, and a black turtle in the dark cold waters to the north. And then I went on to think about all the other guardians who are keeping me safe and healthy -- my doctor, the mayor, the governor, my dentist, all the health care professionals and virologists and epidemiologists and public health experts -- even all the people who willingly wear masks and follow the best public health advice. My next fear is the growing authoritarianism of the Trump administration -- again, so many people are opposing those developments, every person and organization fighting to protect the right to vote, the courts, Democratic politicians, independent organizations like Swing Left and Run for Something -- and every single person who's doing their bit, writing letters and making phone calls and sending texts and contributing money. So I'm one of the guardians myself. I think that helped, and I'll remember it the next time I notice the fear. It's a classic gratitude practice, really.

Local sights -- twice on my walks I've seen people using hookahs. Once I saw two people in the canal park using one; I forget where the other occurrence was. I wonder if they would normally have smoked in some small shop or cafe that isn't open now; I wonder what they're smoking -- they're pretty open about it, so maybe tobacco. I know nothing about it, really.

There's a block of York St, between Washington and Warren, that really accumulates litter, and this morning, I saw a woman with a reacher

organizing some trash bags to clean it up! She said she often picks up litter along York Street. I was delighted to see someone else doing it, and thanked her profusely. I forgot to ask if she knew about the teenager with the web site.

The Barrow St AA meeting was very nice this morning.

Frank Figluzzi (sp) is a guest on last night's Maddow. Along with saying how egregious the behavior of the Feds in Portland is, and how much it's exacerbating the situation, he calls it security theater. That's a good way to describe it.

I just participated in a letter-writing party with folks in Florida. It was interesting to learn something about how it's going there, and it was a highly engaged group.

I just watched the Maltese Falcon, and here's my favorite line, spoken by Joel Cairo: "No, no. Our private conversations have not been such that I am anxious to continue them. Forgive me for speaking so bluntly, but it is the truth." I hope I get to say that to somebody some day, though I hope it isn't because they've beaten me up a couple of times.

*NYT: The Trump administration has balked at providing billions of dollars to fund coronavirus testing and shore up federal health agencies as the virus surges across the country, complicating efforts to reach agreement on the next round of pandemic aid; a study in South Korea finds that older children spread the virus comparably to adults. (Some people are casting doubt on that study, though.)*

Sunday, July 19

*Reuters: The World Health Organization reported a record increase in global coronavirus cases for the second day in a row, with the total rising by 259,848 in 24 hours*

Excellent qigong class today.

I'm so glad I found this guy to follow:

[Madhu Pai @paimadhu](#) OK, inspired by all the ecologic correlations, I'm making my own [#COVID19](#) polyjuice potion". Ingredients: BCG, MMR, polio vaccine, Vit D, cucumber, cabbage, HCQ, nicotine, disinfectant. / Flavoring: bubble tea / Catalyst: sunlight / What did I miss?

The sword class was also excellent. And now I'm going to sit down and work on some letters.

Listening to TWiV. Dr. Daniel Griffin says that cases are starting to pick up in New York City, something I hadn't heard before. That is disturbing. He says testing delays have become terrible, here as well as in Texas and Arizona. He completely agrees with the approach laid out by Michael Mina on the last episode of TWiV. He echoes the point that we need cheap fast tests, and we don't need such high sensitivity, because we want to pick up the infectious patients, not just anybody with a tiny bit of virus. He says they're seeing more alcohol-related admissions, which he mentions as part of an argument for opening schools as soon as possible. He says he's starting to think that the "long haulers" are more common than not. In a recent JAMA article, only 12.6% of covid patients said they were back to normal after 2 months. Some people are losing their hair after covid -- even women.

There are a bunch of completely fabulous posts on twitter that begin, "I'm a 39-year-old fatass mom" written by women who turned out in Portland to protect the kids from the government thugs. They all got gassed and the kids helped them learn what to do.

Tonight's AA meeting: An agnostic 11th step meeting based in Atlanta. Wow. What an interesting combination. It started and ended with 5-minute meditations.

Monday, July 20

A third vaccine, the one from the UK, has been shown to be safe and to induce antibodies. The first two (one in China, one from Moderna) did the same.

It was quite a busy day, so I spent less time on the news. Whew. As I was

doing the NYT puzzles this morning, Evan Facetimed me and we spent an hour or so playing Roblox video games. I broke off so I could do my stretches and PT, then take a shower, so I'd be ready for my appointment with Cara Jacobs at 1:15 -- my annual physical by telemedicine. Just before time, I took my blood pressure using Henry's home tester, and that turned out to be just the right thing to do, because it's the only thing Medicare wants in order to approve the visit. She renewed my prescription for lipitor and convinced me to start taking Fosamax.

After that, I had just a little time before the tai chi school board meeting. We met to discuss our plans for the fall. We surveyed the teaching staff, and they spoke with one voice -- nobody was ready to go back to teaching in person at Ripley-Grier studios. Fran had also talked with her students, and they felt the same way. So we will continue to teach via zoom, and we will move from teaching review classes only and start teaching new material. There are serious limitations to deal with, but we will do our best. A few teachers have declined to try teaching over zoom -- either they already get too much zoom during their work day, or they don't think they have suitable space in their apartment for teaching. We believe we have enough willing staff, though, to proceed.

Tuesday, July 21

Dr. Monica Gandhi on NPR: Right. So as you said, they're [masks] very beneficial to protect others because you shed at high rates from your nose and mouth even when you feel fine. So that had been kind of the party line for a while. But they really are protective of you as an individual. And sort of putting it all together, it really is that the less virus that you get in, the less sick you're likely to be. So not only do masks protect you - and we've seen from getting the virus and altogether. And that's been seen in hamster studies. That's been seen in a health care worker study that was just published last week in JAMA. But if you do get the virus in, you get very little in. And you're likely to get what's called an asymptomatic infection or not have any symptoms at all and - or a very mild infection. So it really is based on the fact that we've known for many years now - probably a hundred - that the more virus you get into your system, the more likely you are to get sick. And these masks protect you.



I'm still staying indoors, because we're in such a heat wave. I did some tidying and organizing this morning, and put together a card full of jokes and comic strips to send to Evan. I decided the other day to take more qigong classes, so I started one that's on Tuesdays at noon, taught by someone in Marina del Rey, near Los Angeles. It was lovely. Then I had lunch before logging in for today's letter-writing session -- I finished my next 40 letters as part of a Vote Forward experiment. They're trying to decide, I think, how long before an election to send letters. And now I have a break before my workout with Ken at 4.

I have to mention the #wallofmoms in Portland. The Trump administration has decided that the demonstrations in various cities are intolerable, and they've started with Portland. Using graffiti on federal buildings as an excuse, they have brought in an irregular army of border control and ICE agents, who have been violent and aggressive toward mostly peaceful demonstrators. They gas and beat people, they shoot reporters with rubber bullets. They grab people and pull them into unmarked cars. Apparently they release them fairly soon, but these are secret police tactics that remind us of the Gestapo. The governor and the mayor have insisted that they leave, the DA has filed suit, but they won't go and the administration claims that they will attack other cities soon.

The response in Portland has been great. Instead of melting away, the demonstrations have grown, and part of the group is young and middle-aged women calling themselves the Wall of Moms. I love them to death. They stand with arms links in front of the young people, and the goddamn secret police throw tear gas at them.

It's apparently part of Trump's re-election strategy. He wants to convince us that cities run by Democrats are a lawless nightmare, and only he can deal with it. It didn't work when he did it in Washington, DC, and I hope it doesn't work here, either.

It should also be noted that some of the demonstrators say that there's not a lot of difference between the local police and the feds, despite Portland's reputation as a progressive city.

The covid-19 death rate exceeded 1,000 today, for the first time since June

9.

Wednesday, July 22

On the letter-writing call yesterday, somebody mentioned that she gets nervous whenever she leaves her house. Since that's exactly how I feel, and it seems so irrational to me, it gave me great comfort to hear that I'm not alone.

In the news: At his request, Trump's ambassador to the UK tried to get the British Open moved to his golf course in Scotland. It didn't work.

There are a lot of great videos of the demonstrations in Portland last night. The moms wore yellow, and a lot of dads showed up in support, wearing orange. I saw one carrying a lawn rake, and one with a blower or some other lawn tool.

NBC News: Twitter has classified QAnon material as coordinated harmful behavior, has banned some accounts and limited others in some way. Apparently they tweet a lot of threats. "QAnon followers have also been implicated in [armed standoffs](#), [attempted kidnappings](#), harassment and [at least one killing](#) since the conspiracy theory first gained traction on the internet in October 2017. / [Last year](#), the FBI designated QAnon as a potential domestic terrorist threat." So I don't know why it took Twitter until now to do this.

I took a walk before it got too stinking hot to go out there, came home, changed my wet clothes, and had breakfast, after which Henry and I did some housework. Phew. Now I get to sit down for a second cup of tea.

There's a new Randy Rainbow video today! Randy Rainbow and Sarah Cooper are the other persons of the year.

Our city councilperson, James Solomon, called to ask me if I'm interested in being an ally inside 77 Hudson of the efforts to organize concierges, porters, and other employees in Jersey City highrises. It turns out that they are actually employees of a company called Planned, which signs contracts with building management. The union is an affiliate or branch of SEIU

called 32BJ. I said sure, so I'll hear from somebody in the union within a few days and I'll learn what they would like me to do. I also texted Laura to see if she's interested, too, or can give me the contact information of people in the building she knows who might be.

I asked him if the subject of recycling #5 plastic had ever come up. He said no, and I told me about 'Gimme 5,' the project of preserve.eco, and emailed him the information after the call. I also asked whether anyone had suggested outdoor haircuts, and he said that a salon owner had told him that there could be hygiene issues. I presume that's because of something I thought of a few days ago, that the little hairs could blow around too much.

The COVID Tracking Project @COVID19Tracking *Our daily update is published. States reported 70k cases today, the third-highest number we've seen. The country is nearing the peak level of COVID-19 patients hospitalized (~60k). States reported 1,126 deaths, and the 7-day average is now over 800, back to the levels of June.*

Several people refer to the people who have died of covid-19 as "lost souls." I first heard it from Gov. Murphy, but I've heard others say it, too. Joy Reid just said it on MSNBC. I think Murphy sometimes says 'blessed souls.' Either one sounds strange to me, but people do hate to talk about death, and I guess public figures are afraid to sound callous.

Hoboken women's meeting.

Thursday, July 23

Today's schedule: I get my new permanent crown this morning; workout at 4; teach tai chi at 7:30.

The CDC has now said that covid patients can resume normal activities after ten days. I think I've mentioned that the PCR test reports the presence of RNA, but doesn't distinguish between live, infectious disease and RNA fragments.

[Abraar Karan](#) [@AbraarKaran](#) CDC update on not requiring PCR negativity

for clearance & discharge is def the right move— clinically I have seen countless recovered patients test positive for several weeks on end. Just today, reviewed a case where PCR is + \*over\* 3 months later.

Dr David Ho was on Rachel Maddow last night, talking about a new paper in Nature (online) about the large number of monoclonal antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 that he and his team have isolated. They each attack a different part of the spike protein. (And don't expect me to explain it any better than that!) From the abstract of the paper: *Here we report the isolation of 61 SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing monoclonal antibodies from 5 infected patients hospitalized with severe disease. Among these are 19 antibodies that potently neutralized the authentic SARS-CoV-2 in vitro, 9 of which exhibited exquisite potency, with 50% virus-inhibitory concentrations of 0.7 to 9 ng/mL. Epitope mapping showed this collection of 19 antibodies to be about equally divided between those directed to the receptor-binding domain (RBD) and those to the N-terminal domain (NTD), indicating that both of these regions at the top of the viral spike are immunogenic. In addition, two other powerful neutralizing antibodies recognized quaternary epitopes that overlap with the domains at the top of the spike.*

In the Christian Science Monitor: "They've faced brutal cops abroad. Now they're advising US protesters. The violent tactics used by U.S. law enforcement in recent weeks are familiar abroad." *And that familiarity is turning global resisters of police brutality into online advisers of American protesters who are now in harm's way.*

The in-person Republican convention has finally been cancelled.

Trump starting holding coronavirus briefings again this week, because he missed the great ratings those briefings used to get. However, he isn't inviting the scientists this time, so who's going to watch? I'm waiting to hear how they're going.

[The COVID Tracking Project @COVID19Tracking](#) OK, well, now our daily update is published. States reported more than 70k cases for the 4th time ever. Hospitalizations are near their all-time high (with the previously noted caveats). More than 1,000 deaths were reported for the third day in a row, after 55 days sub-1,000.

We've surpassed 4 million cases and 144,000 deaths. Cases are increasing in about 40 states. NY, NJ, and CT still holding steady, and very nervous about it. We all remember that it was circulating for some weeks before it surfaced, and we see test delays mounting again, too.

Deaths are increasing in about 25 states.

The NYT has an editorial entitled "Millions of Americans Are About to Lose Their Homes. Congress Must Help Them." *Twenty-two percent of households say that they don't expect to be able to make their next monthly rent or mortgage payment, according to a [Census Bureau survey](#).*

Ken asked to postpone the workout today, saying he doesn't feel up to it. SARS-CoV-2 has been hard on him -- his work isn't satisfying, he misses being with people, he's responsible for his mentally ill brother, and he hasn't been able to get to the retreat center in Costa Rica where he wants to go. I think it'll be a while before Americans are welcome anywhere. I did some stretching, a couple of core exercises, and my exercises for the upper back; maybe I'll see Ken tomorrow.

Tai Chi class was good, though we were down to 3 students from our original class.

I've been in very good spirits lately -- I seem to be the right amount of busy and to have an acceptable amount of human contact. I'm lucky that Henry's presence plus socializing on zoom is good enough for me; I know it isn't enough for some people.

Friday, July 24

Max Roser tweeted a plot from Our World in Data showing the countries he's worried about -- they haven't bent the curve and they have high positive rates: US, India, Brazil, South Africa, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Oman, Indonesia, Costa Rica, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria. That's a lot of countries in trouble.

The Wall of Moms is still showing up in Portland, and the dads have started to join them. The dads bring leaf blowers to disperse the tear gas, and a

grandfather showed up last night with a really big leaf blower. The moms wear bike yellow shirts and bike helmets. When asked, they say they're there to support Black Lives Matter. The videos are wild -- lots of umbrellas and home-made shields. I just watched someone putting a large funnel over a tear gas cannister while others douse it with water. They're learning fast out there.

Elizabeth Warren in an op-ed in the NYT: *Those who frame the debate as one of health versus economics are missing the point. It is not possible to fix the economy without first containing the virus. We need a bold, ambitious legislative response that does four things: brings the virus under control; gets our schools, child care centers, businesses, and state and local governments the resources they need; addresses the burdens on communities of color; and supports struggling families who don't know when the next paycheck will come.*

I had a couple of tai chi classes this morning and a workout appointment with Ken this afternoon. Made a bean stew for dinner -- some more wonderful Rancho Grande beans.

The trends in the numbers continue -- more tests, more cases, more deaths. Testing labs report having trouble getting the supplies they need. We've made so little progress since April.

Wow, cases and deaths just jumped around the world, too. A quarter million new cases today and yesterday; 9,600 new deaths today. 7-day average: 6200.

Item: The Supreme Court rejects argument that a Nevada restriction on church attendance during the coronavirus pandemic is unconstitutional.

Saturday, July 25

The Portland protests keep growing. I just watched a video of a wall of veterans protecting the wall of moms. Please let this happen in every other city these feds are sent to.

Related tweet: Hearing from a friend in Portland that there are 10-15k

marching tonight. The “Walls of Moms” (wearing yellow) & Dads (orange), joined by “Wall of Vets,” “Teachers Against Tyrants” (green), Healthcare Workers (in scrubs) & Lawyers for BLM (purple)

I haven't commented much on schools, but that's the biggest virus topic in all news outlets lately -- whether to open, how to open, the credibility of CDC recommendations; do kids spread the virus, what about the teachers, what about the parents? The consensus of the experts is generally that you can only open schools in areas where the virus is under control, and of course as long as it's raging out of control in so much of the country, it's hard to be confident control will last anywhere.

Another topic in all the media this week is Alexandria Ocasio Cortez's powerful rebuke to Ted Yoho on the floor of Congress. It was really masterful.

I took a walk before breakfast, over to Van Vorst Park and around the block a few times. It was hot but not miserable yet. I was home in time for breakfast and the 10:00 women's AA meeting. I think I'm able to be pretty honest at these meetings about what's on my mind, without worrying about how it's going to sound to these people I don't really know. I've been thinking that I drifted away from AA because I didn't have a service practice. I did service in other areas -- my professional association, my tai chi school -- but without that link to AA, I drifted away once it wasn't clear what I was getting from it any more. So if I want to maintain the link this time, I need to be doing some kind of service. I'm starting very small -- volunteering to be the person who holds people to their 3-minute speaking time.

I'm watching last night's Maddow. The federal ban on evictions ends tonight. I hadn't even realized that was a federal ban; I thought it had been handled at the state level. The other federal aid is expiring as well. The Senate failed to reach agreement and went off on break, leaving the unemployed in a desperate condition. It's just another sign of the complete failure of the US government. It's a perfect reflection of the GOP's priorities: kill the government, let the rich keep all the money and power they can get their hands on. (Rachel Maddow, why is every state 'the great state of ...'?) Teachers have begun to hold demonstrations against the reopening of

schools.

I took a walk before breakfast ... suddenly I'm not sure if I did or not, but yes, I did. Wow, the days do blur together, don't they? Oh man, I already wrote that, so there's my proof. That's a bit disturbing. Person woman man camera TV, to quote Donald Trump when he's trying to prove he's brilliant because he aced the dementia test. Before I saw the note above, I proved it to myself because I remembered seeing the farmers market at Van Vorst Park.

The Upper West Side letter-writing group met today, and then I did my stretches and my exercises for the upper back. After dinner, I checked to see what I had on the DVR (my TV viewing habits definitely show my age), and I watched Spotlight, the film about the Boston Globe's investigation of the Catholic Church coverup of child sex abuse. How many children are sexually abused? That's a terrible, terrible question to have to ask.

Sunday, July 26

Sheree called this morning, and gave me an update on her sister's health problems. I hope they can get her heart stabilized -- after her severe bleeding episode, her heart rhythm is once again too fast. Sheree says she looks old and ill.

I had two tai chi classes today, and didn't do much else. These are my favorite classes -- qigong and sword. Sword especially fills me with happiness, whether I learn anything new or not, and today I did.

From ABC News, we see deaths in nursing homes just as we saw in NJ: *The numbers are already showing the grim reality, underscoring how mask compliance and restrictions in the outside world impact the state's most vulnerable. In the past three weeks, cases have gone from about 2,000 to some 4,800 at Florida nursing homes. Roughly 2,550 long-term care residents and staff have died overall, accounting for about 45% of all virus deaths in Florida.*

Monday, July 27



I woke up at 6, and felt too much dread to go back to sleep, so I went for a walk at about 6:45 -- the park loop, to Van Vorst and Hamilton Square. My mantra was 'channel the dread.'

I spent a long time trying to foam roll the tension out of my legs -- I've been tight from my ankles to my butt. I have to assume it's mostly all tension, because I've been reasonably active, I think.

Various news items today: 40 people in Alabama just tested positive for covid after a church event; a Delta flight turned around after two passengers refused to wear masks; a 43-year-old woman in Portland was shot in the forehead with one of those horrible rubber bullets. Trump's national security advisor tested positive.

Preston (a childhood friend from Delaware) just told me about this: The lynching of George White occurred on Monday, June 2nd, 1903 in Wilmington, Delaware. White was accused of the rape and murder of Helen Bishop, then arrested and brought to the workhouse. On the evening of June 22nd, under the impression that the local authorities were not reacting severely or soon enough, a large mob of men marched to the workhouse, broke their way in, and forced White out of his cell. He was then brought to the site of Helen Bishop's death, tied to a stake, and burned. This is often referred to as the only lynching in Delaware. (Wikipedia)

The demonstrations in Portland have spilled over into Seattle, and there seem to be plenty of people in both cities who are eager to meet violence with violence. I suspect it's mostly white people -- young white men, to be more specific. But really, I have no idea what's going up, except that the federal militias or whatever you call them are clearly not making the situation better.

Tuesday, July 28

I went to bed last night feeling a bit down -- a bit lonely, perhaps. Sometimes I enjoy a day with no commitments, but sometimes empty days make me sad. I should have gone to a couple of AA meetings, apparently. Today is going to be livelier -- qigong at noon, letter-writing at 1:30, workout at 4. I went to the post office to mail the letters I wrote for Vote Forward's

timing test.

Other threads are being picked up today. I reached out to Eve a while ago about registering voters, and she got back to me today: *I put some feelers out there and have seven people (plus myself) who are potentially interested in doing some voter registration. I say potentially, because I'm sure logistics and timing/availability will be factors. Five of them are people I know personally who live in my neighborhood, the other two are people who attended the Juneteenth event last month.*

So we will talk further.

I'm also still looking for progressive allies in the building to support the employee union drive. I texted Laura, only to learn that she moved out months ago -- one of the covid refugees moving away from Jersey City. I figured out that I could message Berna via the 77 Hudson Facebook group, so I just did that.

The hydroxychloroquine story will not go away. The FDA says it's useless, Fauci says it's useless, but Trump loves it, Giuliani loves it, all the Trumpster deplorables love it.

New verb: "You can't bubble college athletes." Well, new use of an existing verb.

Something Meret said on the phone just before MO's qigong class reminded me of the lovely meditation on guardians we did during the taichi training. Maybe it will help me with my dread. I can tell myself that Portland has its guardians and helpers, as does Seattle. There are people working on all the problems that I'm worrying about. I have to trust the guardians.

Just finished my letter-writing session with the lovely people in the San Francisco Bay area. I finally recruited someone to join us -- Tom, my friend from college who lives in Seattle. He seemed to enjoy it and said he'd be back.

School reopening is going to continue to be the hottest issue in the country,

I think:

[Katie Porter @katieporteroc](#) The MLB had a detailed plan in place to restart their season—and it took less than a week for a team to experience an outbreak. To think that we can safely reopen our schools without a clear set of guidelines or a coordinated testing strategy is mind-boggling.

Trump claimed he was too busy and would have to decline an invitation from the Yankees to throw out the first pitch; the Yankees said they had never invited him. With that context, here's a lovely headline from Andy Borowitz in the New Yorker: Trump to Throw Out First Amendment at Yankee Stadium

There really are a lot of funny people in the world, and I think I'll consider them some of my guardians.

My workout was good -- we've cautiously started to make the workouts more strenuous, and it doesn't seem to be making my upper back/shoulder any worse. Fingers crossed.

Wednesday, July 29

Angie's coming to clean today, so Henry and I are planning where to go. Currently we're thinking either Loantaka Brook Reservation (easiest for walking) or Lord Stirling Park (where he hasn't been before). We'll choose Loantaka to be sure of avoiding mosquitos.

A new study (preprint) on viral load shedding reported by virologist Muge Cevik: High SARS-CoV-2 viral loads in URT are detectable in the first week, and peak viral load occurs at day 0-5 - In contrast, peaks in SARS-1 and MERS occurred at days 10-14 and 7-10 of illness - Pts with SARS-CoV-2 are likely to be most infectious day 0-5 / No study to date has cultured live virus beyond d9 in URT despite high viral loads (VL)

Inslee: *Federal officers have left WA.* I'm not even sure I knew they were there.

Covid news: US deaths just exceeded 150K; Louis Gohmert just tested positive. Apparently he's a big schmoozer and almost never wore a mask,

so there are a lot of worried people in Congress today.

From STAT: Two new studies from Germany paint a sobering picture of the toll that Covid-19 takes on the heart, raising the specter of long-term damage after people recover, even if their illness was not severe enough to require hospitalization. / [One study](#) examined the cardiac MRIs of 100 people who had recovered from Covid-19 and compared them to heart images from 100 people who were similar but not infected with the virus. Their average age was 49 and two-thirds of the patients had recovered at home. More than two months later, infected patients were more likely to have troubling cardiac signs than people in the control group: 78 patients showed structural changes to their hearts, 76 had evidence of a biomarker signaling cardiac injury typically found after a heart attack, and 60 had signs of inflammation. ... The [other study](#), which analyzed autopsy results from 39 people who died early in the pandemic and whose average age was 85, found high levels of the virus in the hearts of 24 patients.

And Loantaka it was. It was lovely to be walking in the trees.

I woke up this morning having a dream in which I saw a young black boy keel over on the street. He was in a strange rigid posture, feet and head on the sidewalk, butt in the air, and he had shit himself. In the dream, it seemed that I initially walked past without doing anything, then suddenly ran back to try to help. Somebody else was dialing 911 and I think I went to the boy. This has many associations for me -- first of all, perhaps, is the Black Lives Matter movement and my sense that I'm not doing enough to help. It also, though, reminds me of the dreams I had when I began to mourn my father's death, ten years on. In those dreams, a man needed help and my responses varied -- in the early dreams, I didn't usually help; in later dreams, I did. And thirdly, it reminds me of a haunting half-memory I have of driving west on Route 80, heading back to Wisconsin after a trip east. I was driving carefully because the road was covered with snow. Was I home from college? I'm not sure. Since I was driving, I was the only one to see in the rear-view mirror that a car behind us spun off the road. I <think> I saw that, and I <know> I did nothing. I would have had to stop immediately and walk back down the highway to look for the car. I hesitated to act, and the distance grew, and finally I did nothing. I've been troubled by this memory ever since. Perhaps it's one of the worst things I

ever did; perhaps it didn't even happen.

There's been an odd story circulating for a few weeks. People get packets of seeds they never ordered in the mail, and it seems they may be part of a "brushing scam," which a news report defines this way: "What happens is overseas con artists send you merchandise—sometimes they order things from [Amazon](#)—and it just arrives. You didn't pay for it. You didn't order it," said Dick Eppstein, president of the [Better Business Bureau Serving Northwest and West Central Ohio and Southeast Michigan](#). / Eppstein says this scam gives the illusion that the business is credible by finding a person's name and address online, sending the product to them and writing a review using their name.

Covid cases nationwide have reached a new peak (about 65K, looking at the smoothed curve at covidtracking.com) at about double the peak we reached in April when NY and NJ were peaking. They don't seem to be increasing further, which seems a bit odd when we hear that cases are increasing in so many states. They must be dropping somewhere. There's been a small increase in NJ, perhaps due to the superspreading events at parties, so that an increasing proportion of cases are among young people -- though they're still only at about a third of known cases.

Hospitalizations are up to their former peak, at around 60K. Deaths are climbing steadily; they're up to about half the level of the peak when NY and NJ were at their worst (looking at the smoothed curves, 1K per day now; 2K per day then).

I haven't been able to get in to the Hoboken Women's meeting tonight; zoom is telling me that 'The host has another meeting in progress.' I'm not sure I have any numbers from that meeting, but I can ask Linda about it on Saturday. I'll try an agnostics meeting at 8 instead -- I found a password for a Madison area meeting, and let's see if that helps. It worked! And I'm in. They steered me to another site -- seemingly better maintained -- where I can find secular meetings.

Thursday, July 30

Nearly the end of July. We have very few markers for the passage of time,

but it keeps passing regardless.

Herman Cain, a former contender for the Republican presidential nomination, went to Trump's rally in Tulsa where mask-wearing was rare. He was later diagnosed with covid-19, hospitalized, and now he has died of it.

I repotted a plant this morning -- my sansevieria sprouts babies at an impressive rate, and I separate them and put them in new pots. So far, I've given them all away, but maybe this new one will live here. Then I made a salad, a slaw, with the little red cabbage that was part of my last Misfits order. It's okay, which is lucky, because there's a <lot> of it, and Henry won't be eating any of it. After lunch, I made a batch of muffins to use up some of our old bananas. I idled away the afternoon yesterday on the couch, so I felt a need to be more useful today.

Taught tai chi tonight.

Case counts starting to drop, though they have quite some distance to travel to get back down to their lows in June. Deaths still high, over 1000 a day.

Seen on twitter: *Jaw-dropping and sickening: According to [@KatherineEban](#) [@VanityFair](#), the White House DID actually come up with a decent national testing plan -- until it was killed for political reasons, among them that the virus was then ravaging blue states*

**NYT: *A Collapse That Wiped Out 5 Years of Growth, With No Bounce in Sight***

*The second-quarter contraction set a grim record, and it would have been worse without government aid that is expiring. / The coronavirus pandemic's toll on the nation's economy became emphatically clearer Thursday as the government detailed the most devastating three-month collapse on record, which wiped away nearly five years of growth. / Gross domestic product, the broadest measure of goods and services produced, fell 9.5 percent in the second quarter of the year as consumers cut back spending, businesses pared investments and global trade dried up, [the Commerce Department said](#). / The drop — the equivalent of a 32.9 percent*

*annual rate of decline — would have been even more severe without trillions of dollars in government aid to households and businesses.*

Henry and I are so lucky to be (knock wood) immune to these economic effects: retired, with investments and pensions. There can't be many people as lucky as we are at this time.

Friday, July 31

This morning, I took my first alendronate (generic Fosamax) pill, in the hope of building some bone in my spine. The possible side effects are daunting.

The chair of the UCSF Department of Medicine just tweeted a long thread on what's going on in his hospitals, and what we're learning about treatment and testing. He's solidly on the side of quick, less sensitive tests, saying that people are at their most infectious in the first 5 days of the illness. And he mentions a new treatment being studied:

[Bob Wachter @Bob\\_Wachter](#) Exciting preliminary data on inhaled interferon beta. In study out via press release, Synairgen's interferon resulted in 79% [decrease] in intubation/death. "Intriguing" but need to see actual study. Other studies ongoing, incl. sub-q interferon & inhaled interferon at home.

XPRIZE has announced a \$5 million prize for the creation of a quick, cheap, at-home test for SARS-CoV-2.

[Amy Maxmen @amymaxmen](#) NEW from CDC: [#COVID19](#) outbreak at an overnight camp in Georgia infects \*at least\* 260 campers & staff.

- 51% of positives 6-10yo -44% 11-17 yo
- Camp required a test <12 days before arriving & attempted "pods"
- Masks required for staff but NOT campers
- \*Out of 597 campers & staff, 344 were tested and 76% of those tests were positive
- 26% positives report no symptoms
- Bottom line from [@CDCgov](#): Children of \*all\* ages are susceptible to [#SARSCOV2](#) & "might play an important role in transmission"

"Insight is the booby prize of therapy." I just heard Lori Gottlieb say that on

the Shrink Rap Radio podcast. She said she isn't the author of that saying, but she loves it, and I do, too.

After my two tai chi classes, I did a couple of chores and then went for a walk. It's been a while since I did a cleanup walk, so I grabbed a few bags and hit the road. There was a lot of trash on Suffolk right near the building, a bit along the fence around the Colgate Clock, and <really> a lot in Morris Canal Park. I filled 3 small bags and one large one.

Now I'm listening to podcasts, setting up envelopes, and eating an early dinner -- a mushroom and scallion omelet and a plate of steamed broccoli. Lunch was a kale/banana/cherry smoothie and cabbage/carrot slaw.

And now Lori said that her supervisor told her, "Before diagnosing someone with depression, make sure they aren't surrounded by assholes." Her book must be a delight.

Twitter: The WHO reported 292,527 new [#COVID19](#) cases on Friday, a new record. It says the pandemic's effects "will be felt for decades to come."

- 5,200 people have died every day in July, on average
- Nearly 40 countries reported new case records this week

Saturday, August 1

This tweet gives me enormous comfort:

[Joshua Potash @JoshuaPotash](#) No feds gassing people last night in Portland. No police attacking people. No state troopers bull rushing the crowd. And there was no violence.

But we have to wonder what city they'll attack next.

I enjoyed the women's meeting this morning. As long as I know the focus is going to be excessively spiritual for me, I can relax and listen.

Doing a few chores -- changed the filter in the room air purifier, started some laundry, working on a meeting announcement to NY apprentices.

My letter-writing event didn't really happen today. Arlene and I were the



only two there, because she was promoting her group's picnic in Riverside Park this evening instead. So we chatted for a while, then went our separate ways. I got through 20 letters on my own, then broke off to make barley/lentil/mushroom soup.

I went for a walk along the river after dinner, and it was lovely -- not too hot or humid, with a good breeze blowing. There were a lot of people -- an amount of people that I remember finding frightening when we were early in quarantine, but it seemed ok given our current state of knowledge.

NYT: A newly developed blood test for Alzheimer's has diagnosed the disease as accurately as methods that are far more expensive or invasive, scientists reported on Tuesday, a significant step toward a longtime goal for patients, doctors and dementia researchers. The test has the potential to make diagnosis simpler, more affordable and widely available. / The test determined whether people with dementia had Alzheimer's instead of another condition. And it identified signs of the degenerative, deadly disease 20 years before memory and thinking problems were expected in people with a genetic mutation that causes Alzheimer's, according to [research published in JAMA](#) and presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference.

Sunday, August 2

I just saw a great blue heron fly along the Hudson in front of our windows! That's a bird I've never seen up here, so far from Liberty State Park.

A thought during yesterday evening's walk: I behave badly when I'm envious because I'm ashamed of my envy. But while envy is not particularly admirable, it isn't unusual or horrifying. Can I learn to be kinder to myself about it?

Holy shit: A recent JAMA paper (Puntmann et al) reports, "In this cohort study including 100 patients recently recovered from COVID-19 identified from a COVID-19 test center, cardiac magnetic resonance imaging revealed cardiac involvement in 78 patients (78%) and ongoing myocardial inflammation in 60 patients (60%), which was independent of preexisting conditions, severity and overall course of the acute illness, and the time

from the original diagnosis." Two thirds of the patients had not been hospitalized. This is a small study, done in Frankfurt, but I've started hearing this same message elsewhere.

I spent about an hour stretching this morning while I listened to dharma talks, then I had a qigong class; after lunch, sword class. Whew. Now I'm ready for the family zoom, and maybe I'll do a few letters during the call. Or maybe that will feel rude, I'll see. (I managed a few, but mostly I was part of the conversation.)

NYT: [\*Russia plans to launch a nationwide vaccination campaign in October with a coronavirus vaccine that has yet to complete clinical trials, raising international concern about the methods the country is using to compete in the global race to inoculate the public.\*](#) Interesting. They're clearly not going to bother with Stage 3 trials, which is risky.

Covid-19 spreading through the country, wildfires in southern California, Hurricane Isaias traveling up the east coast. Wow.

Monday, August 3

Today is turning out to be a lively day. I started with the tai chi "tuning," and I hope I can stick with it, because it's a lovely way to start the day. At ten, I had a zoom call with Lisa McAllister, an SEIU 32BJ organizer, about the effort to organize the staff of our building. They work for a contracting company called Planned Companies, owned by First Residential, yet (thankfully) the union is still able to organize groups of employees one building at a time. She isn't asking me to do anything challenging yet -- just provide information to the union that might be helpful to them. She was interested to hear about the rumor that some of our concierges had covid.

In a few minutes, it'll be time for a qigong class -- whoops, not qigong, "Time in the Art," on how to teach new material over zoom. One idea that has been tested in England is to teach all the postures, while leaving the transitions until such time as we can work with students in person. Hal raised the question of safety -- they decided to teach the walking version of the lotus spin, because someone could fall in a dangerous way, and they might be alone in their homes.

Alas, Portland's Wall of Moms has been hit by infighting. I'm sure the details are too depressing to read about or to describe here.

I talked with Eve about doing some voter registration in Jersey City, and she was great. She had a lot of useful suggestions, like going to the parks in the evenings or when the Farmers Markets are open. We talked about what equipment we might need, and I ordered myself an easel. I realized that I could just go down to the Hudson any evening I like. I'd like to get somebody to join me.

I printed out my next 40 letters, and set up those envelopes before dinner.

It's a hot day, so a walk after dinner might be appealing. But no, because I'm doing text banking for Malinowski for a couple of hours this evening. He uses outvote.io, and I can see what a primitive interface this is compared with what they do at Open Progress -- maybe I'll get back to work with them now that my feet are wet again. I think I sent 600 texts and, at least so far, have only received opt outs and wrong numbers. I lost the ability to respond at some point and had to email the organizer; she responded that the system shuts down at 8 and will restart tomorrow.

It's going to rain all day tomorrow as Hurricane Isaias passes over NJ.

I just checked the NYT site about the virus in the world. Nearly every country in South America is bright red on their map of "Hot Spots," along with the US and South Africa. There are a quarter million new cases every day, nearly 6 thousand deaths. Another article says that other diseases are becoming unmanageable, like tuberculosis, as the pandemic interferes with medical and public health practices.

Trump has attacked Dr. Birx for saying how serious our situation is; Fauci has defended her. Trump pushes the fantasy that the virus is under control and states must open their schools, but emerging data makes it clearer every day that children do transmit the virus -- which is hardly under control anywhere, though the NYT doesn't show as many states with increasing cases today -- 17, one of which is NJ. (Note that it's only decreasing in 6 states.) Gov Murphy just reinstated more severe measures, reducing the

number of people who can take part in an indoor gathering together, as our estimated reproduction rate nears 1.5.

Tuesday, August 4

It's been another busy day. I started with qigong, and I still think it's a great way to start the day. I started preparing for my 10:00 workout 30 minutes beforehand, and it was another good workout. Then MO's qigong class at noon, and a letter-writing session at 1:30. Finally I can now loaf around on the couch and watch last night's tv recordings.

I still need to follow up on those texts from last night, but when I tried this morning, I still wasn't able to do it. I try to view a message in my inbox, but it hangs.

The Manhattan DA, Cyrus Vance, is continuing to pursue a subpoena for 8 years of Trump tax returns, citing a pattern of criminal activity; Trump is continuing to fight, changing tactics after the Supreme Court said his office does not shield him. This story should be pleasing to watch.

Hurricane Isaias, downgraded to a tropical storm, passed over NJ all day today, and it's mostly gone now -- at least we have some sunny blue sky, though it continues to be quite windy. Maybe I'll go out for a walk soon.

Henry and I took a short walk. And yes! it was very windy. On Sussex, heading down to the river, it was sometimes a challenge to remain on our feet. It was quite exciting. There were a lot of branches down, but the trees there are small, so they just got a good pruning. The wind was quieter as we headed over to the canal, and we saw bigger branches down on Washington. We learned later that even Jersey City, with its relatively sparse tree cover, had lost some big branches and even big trees. Gov Murphy tweeted that 1.3 million households in NJ had lost power.

We signed in to a zoom session last night where somebody from the association that manages a few blocks of waterfront told us how they were addressing complaints about loud cars, drinking, fireworks, and so forth along the waterfront at night. It reminded me uncomfortably of the position that guards and police are like the private forces of rich white (and Asian,

here) people, protecting their property from the unruly poor (and brown?) people. It was interesting and uncomfortable; we didn't say a word. We're so privileged that we're on a high enough floor not to be bothered! And such old fogies that we don't go out at night, either.

Wednesday, August 5

There's nothing on my calendar until this evening.

I went for a walk before lunch, talking with Sheree as I went around and around Van Vorst Park. After lunch, I vacuumed and did a couple of small sorting tasks -- Henry and I want to thin out our things to simplify our anticipated move to the senior community.

The virus news is all pretty bad. Trump yells about opening the schools but disclaims any responsibility for doing anything that might make that possible. Florida just surpassed 500,000 official cases -- California, Florida, and Texas have all topped New York by now. New York and New Jersey are still far ahead of the others in numbers of deaths, but the country is averaging over 1,000 deaths a day now. One state or city after another is decided that it isn't safe to reopen schools. I don't see how they can until we have rapid testing.

On a British health podcast, I heard that they have a new bedside testing capability with the ability to process a swab in under an hour, but they didn't say much about how it worked or what its throughput was. Can it process more than one test at a time? It sounds useful for hospital settings, but it doesn't solve the problem for people at home.

I prepared my next batch of 40 envelopes, signed up for another letter-writing session tomorrow -- this one based in Maryland. I checked how many letters I've written and how many stamps I have on hand, and ordered 800 more stamps. This is definitely an expensive volunteer activity! No wonder they're having a hard time getting 10 million letters written -- that's 5.5 million dollars in stamps.

I'm looking at the covid case and death plots on [covidtracking.com](https://covidtracking.com). It's interesting to see that the new peak in cases surpassed the first one before

July 1, but the new level of deaths is still far below the that first peak. Perhaps that means that medical treatment of covid-19 is improving, making it fatal less often, or perhaps they're doing a better job of protecting the elderly in congregate care settings. Or perhaps the death rate is still rising.

Thursday, August 6

I started the day off with tai chi, then my workout with Ken, then some of my upper back PT.

The GOP is still blocking another stimulus package; shameful.

The NY AG Letitia James just filed a lawsuit "to dissolve the National Rifle Association for years of self-dealing and illegal conduct. The [@NRA](#) is fraught with fraud and abuse." Good work!

Maddow reporting on a scoop by the NYT: The NY DA subpoenaed Deutsche Bank last year for documents about their relationship with Trump, and it turns out that they complied. They're investigating bank fraud and insurance fraud, as well as the original hush money payments to women. This is separate from the subpoena that made it all the way to the Supreme Court, and less extensive than the Congressional subpoena that Trump sued to block. Hard to keep track.

Seen on twitter: "Totalitarianism in power invariably replaces all first-rate talents, regardless of their sympathies, with those crackpots and fools whose lack of intelligence and creativity is still the best guarantee of their loyalty." - Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)

Maddow, using the NYT again: As we heard a couple of weeks ago, Trump got his Ambassador to the UK to ask for the British Open to be moved to Trump's golf course in Scotland. Apparently an Inspector General has been investigating this, and if so, why haven't we seen a report? That IG has been fired for no clear reason, and of course we suspect Pompeo. A House committee is investigating this particular bit of corruption.

I just wrote my letters with a Maryland group, and they were pleased to get

a lot of first-time letter writers. It's a good group -- well organized with a plan to support candidates for the state house in North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Another paper just came out documenting heart damage in people who have had covid.

Three members of the House of Representatives have tested positive in the last couple of weeks; the governor of Ohio just tested positive as well. He's not the first person finding out he has covid because he was about to meet the president.

Jersey City opened a skate park today -- I'm so focused on suspenseful and dangerous events that it's strange to see something so ordinary and nice happening.

Tai chi class went fine. Watching the news for a while ...

The US has passed 160,000 officially covid deaths now. The utter incompetence, the sheer stupidity -- the mind boggles.

Friday, August 7

I went to Hudson Greene during the senior shopping hour (now 7-8 am) to get blueberries and bananas; found cherries there as well. Summer fruit!

I had a couple of bad dreams last night about a sort of invasion coming from below. The scariest moment, though, was when I was running along a sort of cliff or high bank and realized how close I was to falling.

It's cooler and less sunny today, so I was able to take a walk along the Hudson. I went past the little lighthouse in Newport until the path was blocked. I don't have the stamina I used to, but that was still a pretty good walk.

Adam Schiff: Another court victory: Trump's former White House counsel Don McGahn must testify before Congress. But it's been over a year since he was subpoenaed—exactly what Trump wanted. We must reform the law

to expedite Congressional subpoenas so no president can run out the clock.

Barry Lopez: "Only the misled can insist that heaven awaits the righteous while they watch the fires on Earth consume the only heaven we have ever known"

Trevor Bedford developed an argument (on twitter, natch) that population immunity combined with social distancing measures is what accounts for the leveling off of cases in states like Florida. He thinks that as many as 20% of Floridians have been exposed. And then he says just what I was thinking: "However, this level of immunity is not compatible with a full return to societal behavior as existed before the pandemic."

Bill Gates in a Wired interview: You have to admit there's been trillions of dollars of economic damage done and a lot of debts, but the innovation pipeline on scaling up diagnostics, on new therapeutics, on vaccines is actually quite impressive. And that makes me feel like, for the rich world, we should largely be able to end this thing by the end of 2021, and for the world at large by the end of 2022. That is only because of the scale of the innovation that's taking place. Now whenever we get this done, we will have lost many years in malaria and polio and HIV and the indebtedness of countries of all sizes and instability. It'll take you years beyond that before you'd even get back to where you were at the start of 2020. It's not World War I or World War II, but it is in that order of magnitude as a negative shock to the system.

This is an interesting interview: Before the epidemic came, we saw huge potential in the RNA vaccines—[Moderna](#), [Pfizer/BioNTech](#), and [CureVac](#). Right now, because of the way you manufacture them, and the difficulty of scaling up, they are more likely—if they are helpful—to help in the rich countries. They won't be the low-cost, scalable solution for the world at large. There you'd look more at [AstraZeneca](#) or [Johnson & Johnson](#). This disease, from both the animal data and the phase 1 data, seems to be very vaccine preventable. There are questions still. It will take us awhile to figure out the duration, and the efficacy in elderly, although we think that's going to be quite good. Are there any side effects, which you really have to get out in those large phase 3 groups and even after that through lots of monitoring to see if there are any autoimmune diseases or conditions that



the vaccine could interact with in a deleterious fashion.

This is from the same interview; I didn't know this: There's this thing where the health worker jams the deep turbinate, in the back of your nose, which actually hurts and makes you sneeze on the healthy worker. We showed that the quality of the results can be equivalent if you just put a self-test in the tip of your nose with a cotton swab. The FDA made us jump through some hoops to prove that you didn't need to refrigerate the result, that it could go back in a dry plastic bag, and so on. So the delay there was just normal double checking, maybe overly careful but not based on some political angle. Because of what we have done at FDA, you can buy these cheaper swabs that are available by the billions. So anybody who's using the deep turbinate now is just out of date.

After my final tai chi class of the day ended at 2:00, I spent the afternoon listening to podcasts and playing one of the NYT games. It was very restful. I still have to finish setting up envelopes for tomorrow.

Governor DeWine tested positive in an antigen test but later tested negative in the PCR test. I don't know what an antigen test is. From health.com: "An antigen is a substance recognized by the body's immune system, which can respond by generating proteins called antibodies that specifically recognize that antigen," [Albert Shaw, MD](#), a Yale Medicine infectious disease doctor and professor of medicine at Yale School of Medicine, explains to Health. ... PCR tests, per the FDA, detect the genetic material from the virus—or the virus' RNA—which can help diagnose an active COVID-19 infection. That's different than antigen tests, which, again, test for the virus' proteins.

The article on health.com goes on to say that antigen tests should be less sensitive, with very few false positives, so DeWine's results are mysterious.

I dropped in on the Atlanta secular AA meeting again, and was reminded again that I should be going to these meetings for other people, not just for myself. How should that be reflected in my behavior? I'm not sure it makes sense to help run an Atlanta meeting. I don't want to think too much of myself as a teacher of beginners, but I can try to contribute to each meeting I attend when that seems appropriate.

Saturday, August 8

It's been a pleasant day. T'ai chi, my morning AA meeting, stretching, letter-writing, walking along the river. Someone on the 77 Hudson FB page recommended a hair salon in Denville, and when I checked their web page, their rules were even stricter than my dentist's office! Clients fill out a form, sit in the car until called, get their temperature taken, wear masks -- but also are only allowed to bring in a phone, car keys, and a credit card. I decided to go and made an appointment for next Friday.

Sunday, August 9

I'm up at 5 am because my right ear hurts -- sometimes it stabs at me quite painfully. When this has happened before, it's been an early warning sign of a Meniere's attack, and one thing that helps is drinking water to adjust the balance of inner ear chambers, so that's what I'm doing.

I'm pretty sluggish today, but it's all going fine nonetheless. I didn't skip the morning qigong. I took a short nap before the Fresh Direct order came, and my qigong and sword classes were very nice, though my right knee complained a bit. Now I'll loaf around for a little while and see if I'm ready for a proper nap. Nope, no nap. Listened to podcasts and crocheted. I'll have to go to bed early.

I just learned (from Daniel Griffin on TWiV) that all those goofy drug names ending in mab are named in accordance with a scheme for monoclonal antibodies (m.a.b.). Very cool. I thought it was just marketing madness, but no. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomenclature\\_of\\_monoclonal\\_antibodies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomenclature_of_monoclonal_antibodies)

Monday, August 10

I took a cleanup walk this morning, and picked up 5 small bags worth of trash, mostly around the park. It's very rocky along the water, and sometimes very steep; several times I had to remind myself that I'm getting older and it would be wiser not to reach too far down the slope to fetch trash. A fall there would be dreadful. I took a shower, but I'm still hot. I

forgot the sunscreen, too, and I regret that already -- though I don't think I got burned. It's just that I know my skin will itch this fall.

There was a tai chi class at 1 where the teachers in Richmond showed and described how they teach beginners classes; I did a load of laundry and set up envelopes for tomorrow. I didn't do any of my PT, which I very much intended to do. Like last night, I sauteed zucchini for dinner and ate it with farro.

Tuesday, August 11

I just read a nice twitter thread about the difficulty in disentangling (1) lockdown orders and mask mandates, (2) voluntary social distancing and mask-wearing, and (3) immunity within certain communities due to high exposure. The author (Youyang Gu, creator of covid19-projections.com) is analyzing data from Louisiana, where they have been two distinct peaks which turn out to be in different parishes with different rules in place; a complex situation.

I got a draft email from Eve last night, inviting her crew to sign up for some registration activities. I sent her a response, especially wondering where we might encounter young people -- the new skate park? The Tuesday 4pm demonstrations at City Hall?

So what's today's plan? I think I'll revisit the Seattle AA meeting this morning to collect myself -- I'm awfully scattery, as if there's someplace I have to be today -- which there isn't. Qigong at noon, letter-writing at 1:30, workout with Ken at 4.

I had a cheerful dream last night that I was on a train with Barack Obama and Joe Biden -- it looked like the subway, but it should have been Amtrak! Joe and I were doing yoga, and his downward dog was impeccable. I told them about my tai chi school, and they were interested to know that there's a branch in or near Washington, DC.

At the letter-writing session, there was a young man who is a member of a group named Sunrise something. They formed in 2016 in order to work on climate issues -- they sometimes support candidates, and they've been

using their social networks to get other young people registered. It was lovely to learn about it.

I talked with Polly for a while after the letter-writing session, and it was good to get caught up with her.

In my last conversation with Christine, she told me that her younger brother Peter was not doing well. He's shy and autistic, and an important part of his life before covid was playing racketball. He was doing poorly during the pandemic, and had nearly stopped speaking. Today, she texted me that he had become worse, and stopped eating, too. Just after we spoke, he was admitted to the mental health unit of a nearby hospital, and now he's in a rehab unit, where he seems to be doing better. She's feeling a bit at sea and wondered if I knew anything useful. What I knew was to set her up to talk with Sheree, who has both professional expertise <and> personal experience with mental illness, so they will talk at some point.

At 6:30, I attended a training by Sustainable JC, inducting a bunch of people into a project to map Jersey City's tree cover. It was poorly run, I must say, but they do wonderful work and the information came through all the same. I didn't realize that they are a completely volunteer project (which made me more forgiving of their less-than-smooth operation) attempting to support and encourage Jersey City in caring for its trees. Their motto is "You can't manage what you can't measure." They'll send us a welcome email in a few days, and we will be assigned to neighborhood groups and do some mapping.

Today, Biden chose Kamala Harris as his VP candidate. She was never my first choice, either for president or veep, but there seems to be quite a lot of enthusiasm for her candidacy, so I'm all for it. It is certainly exciting to have a female VP candidate who is part African-American and part Indian.

Watching last night's Maddow. Mississippi and Texas have a test positivity rate of close to 20%. Miserable political news.

Politico: "Trump aides exploring executive actions to curb voting by mail." They continue to be shameless and their behavior continues to be shameful. And Barr is promising to release the results of his investigation

into Biden before the election.

Wednesday, August 12

Angie came to clean this morning, so Henry and I took a few boxes of stuff to the Salvation Army, then walked around at Liberty State Park. It was miserably hot and humid, with occasional pleasant breezes. Anyway, it's good to be back home. Goals for today: set up envelopes, do qigong -- and some stretching and PT, because my legs and hips are really tight today. I have a board meeting at 4, and an AA meeting at 7:30.

Thursday, August 13

Schedule: qigong in the morning, send reminder to apprentices about zoom call on Saturday, letter-writing with the Maryland group at 2, workout with Ken at 4, teach tai chi at 7:30.

Topics in the news: the covid-19 death rate, which the NYT estimates is really over 200,000; reopening schools; the dreadful economy, despite the exuberance of the stock market; the Trump administration's brazen attack on the postal service; other vote suppression by the GOP; Kamala Harris, and the confusing attempts on the right to attack her (she's too tough on crime, she was nasty to Biden and Kavanaugh, she's a radical leftist, she's soft on crime); various hotly contested Senate races; election-rigging and assaults on peaceful protestors and the press in Belarus.

Friday, August 14

By Fridays, I'm ready for a break, after three busy days, so I'm glad to be here. Schedule: sword practice at noon, haircut (my first haircut since February!) at 2:00 in Denville. Maybe I'll go for a walk in a park afterwards. And I want to set up envelopes for tomorrow's letter-writing zoom.

I did get a haircut! I don't think it was a zero-risk activity, but the risk was low. They require that each client fill in a form attesting that we're well, haven't been exposed to someone with covid, haven't travelled outside the state; they take temperatures; clients aren't allowed to bring anything in but car keys, method of payment, and a phone; they have separated each pair

of chairs with something like a shower curtain.

I've had two interesting experiences this week of novel self-awareness -- one physical, one psychological. In my tai chi practice, I'm having a stronger mind-body connection to my hips than I'm used to. I notice that there's some sort of tension or activation in the hip of the stepping leg that has to be released or relaxed before I shift the weight into that leg. And I was thinking about the "bondage of self" and experiencing my self-consciousness as a veil preventing me from seeing or connecting with other people.

Saturday, August 15

I had two anxious dreams last night, one political and one about covid. That about covers it. In one, Mike Pompeo had engineered a war or a national collapse or something; in the other, Andy Slavitt had tested positive.

The board of my tai chi school hosted a meeting for all local apprentices to discuss the plans for teaching in the fall, and it was very nice. It was good to see people and to hear from them, and we heard some alternative suggestions for how we're going to go forward. Three of the junior apprentices don't want to teach at all, for various reasons -- small spaces, feelings of disconnection and busyness, emotional overload. Since I was the zoom host, and we hadn't agreed otherwise, I ran the meeting, and it went pretty smoothly.

Sheree called during the letter-writing zoom, so I had an update on what she told Christine and on Sheree's own sister, whose heart is now beating normally. I finished my letters, and after a bit of a rest, made black lentils for dinner. I was still very tired; this is a weird life and I'm keeping myself very busy.

I had another phone conversation after dinner, this one with Elizabeth, a more junior tai chi apprentice who is a few years older than me, and feels some urgency about making progress with her teaching -- she finds it frustrating that her progress has been interrupted by the difficulty in contributing to remote classes.

I cleaned the kitchen, restocked my vitamin boxes (geezer boxes, Sheree calls them), then hung out on the couch and listened to a couple of podcasts.

And now to bed.

Sunday, August 16

I find myself still chewing over yesterday's meeting. Fran is a challenge to me somehow. She is very insistent on her own path and her own space in a way that I find abrasive. What does it disturb in me? Does it make me feel that I have to choose sides? Or that I have to be more like her or she has to be more like me? I'm not quite sure what the disturbance is.

It rained overnight, and the wind is pretty strong out there -- and in a direction that arouses the whistling outside our apartment.

Monday, August 17

I already don't remember what I did for the rest of the day yesterday -- a lot of podcasts, I think.

It was cooler this morning, a nice relief. I read that this was the hottest July on record in NJ and a few other states, so having a morning which started out below 70 was a special delight. I walked to Van Vorst Park and Hamilton Square. Oh, and I'm still doing qigong every morning, I'm happy to say. There was a tai chi class at 1, after which I set up envelopes for tomorrow's letter-writing session. I bought another few hundred stamps, which should carry me until it's time to stop writing letters and start texting.

Covid-19 outbreaks in schools are showing up in the news lately. There are tweets like this -- *BREAKING: 71 of Mississippi's 82 counties are now reporting #COVID19 outbreaks in schools.*

And we keep seeing this familiar and tragic story: [Abraar Karan @AbraarKaran](#) 1/ In Utah, Hispanic + nonwhite workers accounted for 73% of the [#covid19](#) outbreak-associated cases but only represent 24% of

workers across sectors. Their burden was 3x that of their White counterparts. Keep in mind that we re-opened knowing these workers were not protected.

The Democratic Party convention starts this evening.

People have been wondering where Mike Bloomberg is (or where his money is, really), and here it comes: \$60 million to help hold the House, and more. *Washington Post: A separate group Bloomberg funds, Everytown for Gun Safety, [has committed](#) to spending an additional \$60 million on elections this year, though the amount of money Bloomberg is personally giving to the group has not been disclosed. He has also given millions more to groups such as Swing Left, which is focused on winning state legislative seats in key states, and Fair Fight, a voter protection effort led by Stacey Abrams, a former Democratic gubernatorial candidate in Georgia.*

I did my first phone banking of the year this evening, placing a few calls for Andy Kim. Only one person picked up, and he said he was too busy to talk; otherwise, it was nearly all one answering machine after another. Still, I had my baptism. I set up a google voice account so I could make calls on my own phone without revealing my phone number.

I'm watching part of the convention. It's a very different kind of convention, of course, with no roaring crowds -- taped messages woven together with bits of music. Politicians alternating with ordinary Americans. One woman told about her father's death from covid, saying that "the only pre-existing condition he had was trusting Donald Trump and for that, he paid with his life." There was a montage of Republicans, some former officials and some regular voters, saying that they will vote for Biden. Bernie Sanders is now giving a relatively long speech -- most of the speeches have been very short. He's giving some specific examples of more progressive programs Biden has agreed to push for, from raising the minimum wage to reducing our use of fossil fuels and giving more people access to health care. It's a strong, unambiguous endorsement. Michelle Obama is giving a heartfelt speech about empathy and character; it was very compelling.



There's been an enormous emphasis on racial equity -- in criminal justice, and in the uneven effects of the virus.

Tuesday, August 18

It's beautiful outside, but it's nearly 5 and I haven't been out -- I'm thinking a walk along the river after dinner sounds inviting.

Otherwise it's been a regularly scheduled sort of day -- qigong, laundry, The Daily Show and Colbert from last night to hear what they had to say about the convention. (Trevor taped too early to comment; Colbert said he was frequently moved by it, especially by Michelle Obama.) Qigong again at 1, led by MO, letter-writing with the Oakland group, workout with Ken.

There's been such an outcry against the gutting of the USPS that DeJoy says they won't go further -- but what about the mailboxes and sorting machines that have already been removed? The House came back from recess to work on this, and they won't quit. I think I read that twenty some states are suing, too -- NJ is one.

*NYT: G.O.P.-Led Senate Panel Details Ties Between 2016 Trump Campaign and Russia \*

*A nearly 1,000-page report confirmed the special counsel's findings at a moment when President Trump's allies have sought to undermine that inquiry.*

Well. I don't know if anyone is in a position to use that information, because the Dems are clearly not focusing much on Russian interference, but it's good to see.

Wednesday, August 19

I watched the convention again last night, but didn't see much that struck me as noteworthy. It was a nice gimmick that Biden was nominated by an elevator operator he met at the NYT building -- it certainly speaks to his natural ease with working people.

I'm reading an article in the Atlantic about covid long haulers, now just called long covid. It's described as being a lot like ME/CFS: myalgic encephalomyelitis, or chronic fatigue syndrome. Another term:

dysautonomia, "This is an umbrella term for disorders that disturb the autonomic nervous system, which controls bodily functions such as breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and digestion. " The long-term damage from SARS-CoV-2 is pretty damn scary.

In the department of everybody sues everybody: the Trump campaign is suing various states, including NJ, for mandating voting by mail; various states, including NJ, are suing the USPS for interfering with the mail.

The US has over 5.4 million cases of covid-19 by now, and nearly 172,000 deaths. As always, these are undercounts. NYT: *Case numbers remain persistently high across most of the country ...* The number of new cases each day is declining, but the average number of deaths each day remains high -- over 1,000. Everyone is afraid of autumn and winter, when people spend more time indoors and many schools are reopening -- and the flu season will arrive, too, though it's possible it will be dampened if enough people continue to wear masks and practice social distancing. Henry and I have hardly changed our behavior since the first days of lockdown.

It was cooler outside today, but I kept thinking it was about to rain, so I didn't go outside until late afternoon -- after I had done some serious sweating on the stairs. What a good exercise that is! Up to 50, down to 15, then back home to 33. Whew.

I decided to sign up to write letters with the Maryland group tomorrow, so I set up 40 envelopes. I set a target number of letters to do, figuring that I'll postpone the texting and calling until that's finished. I've still got 100 postcards arriving in the next week or so, too.

I just went to the Hoboken women's AA meeting, where we read and discussed step 8. I'm not sure I really ever did steps 8 and 9 -- too defensive, too armored. The person I never really apologized properly to is Ann Mullen. Maybe I'll give her a call in the next few days and see how she's doing.

NYT: *President Trump on Wednesday offered encouragement to proponents of QAnon, a viral conspiracy theory that has gained a widespread following among people who believe the president is secretly battling a criminal band of sex traffickers, and suggested that its proponents were patriots upset with unrest in Democratic cities. / "I've*

*heard these are people that love our country," Mr. Trump said during a White House news conference ostensibly about the coronavirus. "So I don't know really anything about it other than they do supposedly like me." Jeb Bush tweeted Why in the world would the President not kick Q'anon supporters' butts? Nut jobs, rascists, haters have no place in either Party.*

The convention starts again in 20 minutes .... It seems to be mainly women's night tonight, but we're also hearing about gun violence, immigration, climate change, farmers, small businesses. Here's my favorite, Elizabeth Warren, speaking from inside a day care center. We also heard from Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton; they were both good. Barack Obama gave a really good speech. Kamala Harris is accepting her nomination. She just said this: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." I had to look it up -- it's from Second Corinthians, which is kind of funny because it's the book of the Bible Trump claimed was his favorite when we all know he has no idea what's in the Bible, even less than I do. Kamala is actually in Milwaukee, I think, apparently speaking to a nearly empty room in a large convention hall. Weird times. She's doing a good job, too.

Clips to share on FB tomorrow -- Obama, Kamala, Warren.

Thursday, August 20

Did my qigong, as well as some nice stretching and foam rolling.

A couple of appealing headlines in the Washington Post: [Ex-Trump adviser Bannon indicted on conspiracy charges in alleged border wall fundraising fraud ; Judge rejects Trump's latest bid to shield his tax records from Manhattan district attorney](#)

An ok day. Vacuuming, letter-writing, a workout with Ken -- and I warmed up by doing 30 flights of stairs in my weighted vest, tai chi class after dinner. I'm going to skip the last day of the convention, because I'm a little short on sleep after the last 3 nights.

Friday, August 21

I'm a little blue this morning, with that feeling of the sameness of my days -- that's depression speaking, I think. Perhaps a walk outdoors would cure it. I'm going to the chiropractor this afternoon, and I ought to be able to fit in a walk before or after my appointment -- there are a lot of nice parks out that

way -- Hacklebarney, Jockey Hollow, even little Loantaka.

It's late afternoon now, and the day worked out well. I took a 45-minute walk in Loantaka Park before going to the chiropractor, and had time to go to a drive-up ATM and Trader Joe's in the same trip. Anthony said that everybody he treats is horribly tense -- whether it's covid, or whether they're Republicans afraid of AOC and Hillary or Democrats afraid of Trumpists. Whew. What a year we're all having.

Bernie used the term "united front" when talking with Trevor Noah, and that reminded me of my days as an apprentice communist. I believe that term was used in the US when talking about World War II; he used it to talk about the coalition that has assembled to oppose Trump and his allies. He said that was part of the outside work; the inside work is the struggle inside the coalition to push it to the left. I think that's the first time I've heard him use what I think of as a socialist framework to describe his work in the current moment.

Saturday, August 22

We managed to sleep until 9, which was lovely. I'm now attending the 10am Barrow St women's meeting. I didn't respond to the reading from Daily Reflections, but some of the women's responses are speaking to me. A couple of women have talked about envy and competition. One woman said she prays to be able to make room for others. I think the tricky bit for me is to make room for others <and> for myself. There's enough attention and love for all of us; I don't have to either be the special one or to give up.

Watching Rachel from last night. Whew. Putin's main opponent seems to have been poisoned and is in a coma; Steve Bannon has been arrested for fraud; many schools have reopened with inadequate testing and other protections against the virus, and now they are blaming students for unwise behavior as positive test results climb.

The Republican convention is going to be in DC after failed efforts to hold it in person in various states. It's going to be at a public building (violating the law) which is around the corner from Trump's hotel, which has hiked its rates by 60% for the duration. At the same time, there will be convention events happening somewhere else.

There are two tropical storms heading for the US -- Florida and the Gulf -- at the same time.

It's 8pm now, and I'm finishing last night's Rachel. It's been a busy day. AA meeting, the final fire dance on zoom, letter-writing with the Upper West Side group. I have been in communication with two different women in Jersey City doing voter registration -- I met Leslie on twitter and Karyn on the When We All Vote FB group. I'm going to go out registering with Karyn at Lincoln Park on Tuesday, I think, and head to a cultural event at Berry Lane Park on Sunday week to a table organized by Leslie. So that I could contribute something, I ordered a bunch of posters from Staples today using designs from WWAV -- I already bought an easel, so I think I'm ready to show up and be useful.

Then I received email from the tree mapping people, Sustainable JC, showing me how to make contact with my neighborhood captain on GroupMe, and now I have a date to go out tree mapping on the 31st.

Sunday, August 23

I went to a new AA meeting this morning -- the Sober She Devils. It's a secular women's group -- I can't tell if it has a physical location at all, because there are many women from all over the US and the UK. There's at least one from Brazil and Canada; I think one woman is in China.

Qigong at noon; sword at 2. Henry and I went to Staples to pick up the posters I ordered yesterday, and they look fabulous! So I'm ready to register some voters, starting this Tuesday. We went to a Chinese restaurant near Staples, an unimpressive storefront in that dreadful neighborhood around the Salvation Army, and ordered takeout -- the very first restaurant food we've had since this all started. Everything felt safe -- people wore masks in Staples, and it wasn't crowded; we saw a line of people waiting to enter Best Buy. We thought of going to Target to get me a folding chair for voter registration events, but the parking lot was awfully full, so I ordered one on Amazon after we got home. The Chinese food -- purchased in honor of Henry's birthday -- was pretty good.

Henry's birthday was, for me, an occasion to be grateful that he survived septic shock in November, 2016, so that I've now had nearly 4 more years of his company. We've seen some fairly dire articles about the harm that

septic shock can do, and he seems relatively unscathed so far.

Monday, August 24

I woke up pretty early, and it's going to be unpleasantly hot today, so I started with a walk -- I walked to Liberty State Park, and into it along the gravel path for a little while, but then decided I'd better turn around and walk home. A good start to the day.

Today's schedule: tai chi at 1, phone banking at 6:30. In between, prepare for voter registration tomorrow and set up envelopes -- also for tomorrow.

The GOP has decided not to even bother with a platform. That makes sense, because Trump zigzags so much that there's no point. And the things they really believe in don't bear writing down.

Tuesday, August 25

The phone banking last night was painful; anybody who picks up the phone is pretty quick to hang up again as soon as they hear my voice. Maybe I'm not doing it right, but I may not do it again in any case. I'm going to start texting with Open Progress soon, as a counterbalance to all those letters -- I've got 1240 letters ready to go, and I don't know if I want to buy any more postage!

It's 4:30 and today has been quite busy. I played Roblox with Evan for about an hour this morning -- that was a pleasant surprise, because I haven't heard from him in a while. Michele is having surgery today -- laparoscopic surgery to try to tame a hernia that was the result of her first, more serious surgery. That one was scary; this one not so much. Jeremy's at the hospital and Michele's parents are with Evan.

Then it was time for a qigong class, a letter-writing session, and working out with Ken. At about 6, I'm heading to Lincoln Park to meet Karyn, someone I encountered on the When We All Vote Facebook group. She'll bring the table, I'll bring the posters, and maybe we can register some voters. I've been talking about this for weeks, and finally something is happening!

It turned out that I had pretty much confused Karyn, jabbering about this

person and that park, so we talked for a while on the phone to clear things up. We ended up deciding to skip this evening -- too hot and too much risk of storm. We'll either meet again on Friday afternoon at Van Vorst park, or we'll meet up at the Berry Lane Park event Leslie is organizing.

I did some texting with Open Progress this evening! So I'm back in that game. And my 100 postcards from Moms Rising arrived, too. They're addressed to people in Michigan, North Carolina, Arizona -- the usual suspects.

As for the virus -- new cases and hospitalizations are declining; so is testing, disturbingly. Deaths are dropping a little bit, but they're still averaging 1,000 a day. Who knows what any of this will look like when voting is happening? Current headlines in the NYT: [C.D.C. Now Says People Without Covid-19 Symptoms Do Not Need Testing /](#) The revision prompted confusion and alarm from experts, who called the move "potentially dangerous." ; [Flu Season Could Make Coronavirus Testing Delays Even Worse](#) ; [F.D.A. 'Grossly Misrepresented' Blood Plasma Data, Scientists Say](#)

There has been news for the past several days about two tropical storms hitting Louisiana in close succession. I guess the first one, Marco, petered out without much impact, but Laura is expected to hit as a category 3 hurricane in the early hours of Thursday, right in the middle of the Republican convention. Parts of Louisiana and Texas are evacuating now.

Wednesday, August 26

Because Angie came to clean this morning, Henry and I went to Duke Farms, which neither of us had ever visited. I'm kind of amazed that I've never been there, given that I've visited a couple of other former estates in the past couple of years and I've lived in NJ for many years now -- Filoli, Longwood Gardens. This one has a fascinating story -- J B Duke was a man of great ambition and hubris, and he engineered quite a landscape to explore hydroelectric power. Now it's being managed as a natural landscape and park, with lots of paths and no fees.

I spent the afternoon loafing on the couch, and responded to a few

conversations on Open Progress. I signed up for another letter-writing session so I could start attacking those postcards.

After dinner, there was a board meeting for the tai chi school, making plans for the autumn, starting immediately after Labor Day.

Hurricane Laura has been upgraded to a strong category 4 hurricane, and the damage on the Louisiana coastline is expected to be substantial, with a very high storm surge. Landfall is still expected at about 2, only 6 hours from now as I type.

Gov Murphy said today that he will allow gyms to reopen soon, at 25% capacity, so I imagine the gym in our building might open, too, with strict limits. We'll see.

Oh, another interesting development! Sometime last week, I registered with the Pfizer vaccine trial through [clinicaltrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov), and I got a callback this evening! I answered a bunch of questions about my medical history and my current activities, and I think he said the next step would be an in-person interview in Manhattan -- or did he say there'd be another phone interview? Let's see.

Of course the Republican convention continues all week, and I continue to ignore it the best I can, just seeing it described on twitter, The Daily Show, and Colbert's show.

Abbott has just announced a new \$5 covid-19 antigen test, and they're promising to be able to do about 50 million tests a month by October. It's much closer to the test Michael Mina has in mind, though it can't be administered at home, and it's only been approved for use on symptomatic individuals -- especially following the new CDC guidance about who may be tested. Sigh.

The NYT reports that there have been over 26,000 cases of covid-19 associated with American colleges and universities. If I'm parsing this text properly, more than 20,000 of them have been reported since July.

Thursday, August 27



I made some muffins before breakfast -- we weren't eating bananas as fast as we buy them.

I just met another JC person on When We All Vote and recruited her for Leslie's event this Sunday. The calendar still looks sparse, but we're getting somewhere.

I have to type up the minutes from last night's board meeting, so I'll make another cup of tea and get to it. Done and mailed.

This week, my twitter feed is dominated by the event summarized here: [Ida Bae Wells @nhannahjones](#) Black man with no weapon walks away from Kenosha police and is shot 7 times in the back. White teen with assault rifle who just shot 3 people and KILLED 2, walks by Kenosha police with his gun & they offer him a water and he gets to go home. No greater summary of America exists.

I went to a letter-writing session with the Maryland group. Someone there said that the campaigns are overflowing with people willing to do texting, but they always want people to do phone banking. She also said that text banking is several times more expensive than phone banking, and I should ask my at&t colleagues why that might be. My experience must not be typical -- there must be <some> conversations happening, or everybody would agree that this is pointless. I've decided to give myself permission to stick with texting anyway.

My workout was good, tai chi class was good, and now I'm done. One of the tai chi students was on the top floor of her building and we could sometimes see flashes of lightning through the skylight above her -- very cool.

Seen on twitter: *NEW: CDC director walks back recommendation that asymptomatic people exposed to coronavirus don't necessarily need to be tested. Now, in statement to reporters, he says "testing may be considered" for anyone exposed.* For Pete's sake, people.

Friday, August 28

I'm up early after a restless night. I'm excited and nervous about the voter registration event on Sunday.

Off to a good start this morning -- I took a walk, so I could do that before the heat descended (or does it rise?), and I'm doing a couple of loads of laundry. I want to go to the Seattle AA meeting, and it's just time to log in.

I drafted a letter to apprentices for the tai chi school. I ordered some voter registration flyers from Staples, including a dozen laminated ones I can put on the bulletin boards at Van Vorst Park and Hamilton Square.

Looking at twitter before bedtime. Chadwick Boseman died of colon cancer at 43. Coronavirus tests in Iowa have a 79% positivity rate. A newly published paper offers strong support for saliva as an alternative to the nasopharyngeal swab. The NBA announced that all basketball arenas will be turned into 2020 voting locations.

Saturday, August 29

Let's see, what's happened so far. I went to the 10am women's AA meeting, where the topic was anonymity. It was nice to be reminded that there are so many angles from which to think about it -- protecting oneself in a small community, protecting others, being less secretive in order to let others know about AA.

I'm meeting with my 'neighborhood captain' on Monday evening to map some trees, so I did a bit of homework this morning, trying to identify a couple of the new trees planted along 99 Hudson. The birch trees are probably paper birch, but the maples confused me. I would say red maple, according to the leaves, but the bark doesn't match.

I sent the email to the teaching apprentices of the tai chi school. I attended a letter-writing session with some lovely women in Ohio and California, and learned a bit about the hosts' corner of Ohio; I wrote out another third of my Moms Rising postcards. Then it was time to cook some beans -- they're on the stove now. I checked in with Open Progress, but they don't have anything happening now. I know, I'll watch Maddow from last night.

Sunday, August 30

Today's schedule: qigong at noon, sword at 2. After that, I think I'll be doing some voter registration activities with Karyn and maybe Sheree. We were going to be at the Kemet festival, and black cultural festival in Berry Lane Park, but it was canceled at the last minute due to (I was told) an insurance problem.

I was pretty distracted during my classes, but still got something out of them. Between the two classes, I took a shower, ate lunch, and gave Henry a haircut -- his second since covid hit.

And yes we did go to Van Vorst Park. Karyn set up her table, and Sheree and I put up some voter registration signs on the 3 bulletin boards. I'm not sure we registered anyone, though we gave one woman a registration form in Spanish, and Karyn said a couple of people photographed the QR code on the signs. All the same, we certainly inspired people -- a lot of people were glad to see us and expressed the same urgency about voting that we feel.

Karyn and I made a plan to go to Lincoln Park on Wednesday.

Man, I'm tired.

Monday, August 31

My schedule today is light -- I'm meeting my "neighborhood captain" at 5 to map some trees, and that's it.

I started by grabbing the "When We All Vote" flyers and walking along Grove St and Newark Ave, asking various shop owners and employees if they could display one for the next few weeks. Everyone was friendly, but few people had either the time or the authority to put up a flyer at the moment. I was told to put one up myself in a coffee shop -- I didn't have the right tape, but I leaned one of the laminated ones against the window and put a small statue behind it to hold it in place.

I have apparently been approved to participate in the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine trial, but I suddenly have an appointment for this Wednesday morning! I think I have to drive to Mt Sinai on the upper east side, so I'd better put some gas in the car. And I'll have to write down all my medications and supplements.

Daniel Griffin commented on TWiV that a recent French study shows that most people hospitalized with covid have symptoms that persist (difficulty breathing, fatigue) even 100 days after discharge. He's starting to think that the long haulers are the norm rather than the exception.

I finished my 100 postcards for Moms Rising and handed them to the mail carrier downstairs. I set up 20 envelopes for tomorrow; I need to set up 20 more.

And I did my first tree mapping! It was fun. We looked at the sidewalk trees on the west side of Hudson between York and Sussex (our best guesses? white ash, London plane trees, littleleaf lindens) and on the east side of Hudson between York and Grand (red maple). I can map the rest of the maples by myself one of these days, including the ones in the median between the street and the lightrail line.

It's the midwest's turn to have sharp increases in covid, apparently. Cases spiking in the Dakotas, Iowa, and Kansas. For the moment, cases nationwide are at a plateau of more than 40K cases a day. Deaths are slowly declining; around 900 a day now. Over 6 million cases, 183K deaths. We hear that Trump is back to being interested in pursuing herd immunity and/or pushing the FDA to give early approval to a vaccine. Before November 3rd? Hard to imagine, but I'm sure that's what he wants.

Tuesday, September 1

Ken rescheduled the workout to this morning and canceled Thursday's, because he's getting ready to go to Costa Rica for 2 months. I wrote down some exercise circuits I can do while he's gone.

I keep checking how long it's going to take to drive to the upper east side tomorrow. My confirmation email arrived, giving the address and telling me

that it'll be a 3-hour appointment. There are a few nearby parking garages. Oh, I didn't get gas. Hmm. I have plenty of time to check that later today.

On today's letter-writing call, Val asked us if we could point to a trait or a practice that's getting us through these hard times. It seems to clear to me that my key strategy is keeping busy and trying to feel useful: I'm going to three letter-writing sessions a week, working on voter registration, texting, and calling. I'm mapping trees, studying and teaching tai chi and qigong, going to AA meetings, walking, and working out. And now I'm starting a vaccine trial! Don't forget crocheting an increasing pile of lacy little hot pads. Whew. A lot of that will fall away after the election, but I think there's enough to keep me going even then.

Spotted on twitter and squirreling away:

*Sensitivity: true positive rate =  $TP/(TP + FN)$*

*Specificity: true negative rate =  $TN/(TN+FP)$*

*Here is the dumb way I remember it: each has 2 N and 2 P.*

*seNsitivity = true P / (true P + false N)*

*sPecificity = true N / (true N + false P)*

*See the NPPN and PNNP pattern?*

Wednesday, September 2

I spent about 4 hours in NYC today, enrolling in the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine trial. First, I was given the consent document to read (again), after which a PA went through the same document with me -- they're serious about this -- and then took a detailed medical history -- surgeries, medications, supplements, health conditions. I didn't say anything that excluded me, so I was then given a short physical exam (bp, lungs, eyes, ears, height, and weight), and a nurse came in to draw blood and administer a nasal swab (not the nasopharyngeal swab, but something much shallower).

They sent me out to get some lunch while they submitted the order to their pharmacist. The real vaccine has to be thawed, so of course the saline solution requests have to take the same amount of time, because the staff

and I are all not allowed to know what's in the injection I get. Back in the exam room, I downloaded the tracking app they ask subjects to use while I waited for the next nurse. After the injection, they asked me to wait in the waiting room for 30 minutes to make sure I was ok. The PA came in with a folder that included a digital thermometer and a nasal swab kit I will use if I experience covid symptoms -- they won't give me the results, so I would still need to get tested locally.

Thursday, September 3

I wouldn't say I had any symptoms at all -- not even soreness in my arm, which has been pretty severe with some of my recent vaccinations. So I imagine I'm in the control group. That's a good assumption to make in any case, because it would be dangerous to start imagining that I have some protection against the virus.

I do, however, have a bit of an emotional hangover. It was a long day, and I was probably blocking my anxiety about what I was choosing to do -- it isn't risk free, and it's a bit of work. I haven't been to the city at all since covid began, and I had to drive around on crowded streets, find a parking garage, and then be in contact with a number of people. It's good to be home. I think I'll mostly take it easy today. I have a letter-writing group and a tai chi class. I want to vacuum the apartment and figure out why I can't log in to check on the debit card they gave me at Mr. Sinai -- there's some discrepancy in the spelling of my name or something.

I did some qigong, did the vacuuming, sorted out the problem with the debit card, and set up the other 20 envelopes for today's call. I'm surprised I'm getting so much done, as flattened as I felt this morning.

Covid cases were declining nationally, but that decline seems to have slowed -- averaging about 40K each day. Deaths have declined a little; about 900 a day. I'm glad to be participating in a vaccine trial. According to NPR, at least 260 new cases and one death have been associated with the motorcycle rally in Sturgis; that's completely unsurprising and probably more will emerge.

Friday, September 4

I've been restless since about 4am, so it's good to be up. I'll go to Hudson Greene at 7 for the senior shopping hour. What else for today? Sword rounds at noon, and then another attempt at phone banking at 3.

My particular twittersphere is talking about a recent Atlantic article which quotes Trump as follows: *In a conversation with senior staff members on the morning of the scheduled visit [to a military cemetery near Paris], Trump said, "Why should I go to that cemetery? It's filled with losers." In a separate conversation on the same trip, Trump referred to the more than 1,800 marines who lost their lives at Belleau Wood as "suckers" for getting killed.* Many of us find that easy to believe because of the way he disparaged John McCain's military service, saying that he liked people who weren't captured. In the current upside-down times, Republicans don't defend the troops and Democrats revere them.

I've had a quiet day. I attended sword practice, and then went right back to the couch. I had signed up for phone banking this afternoon, but I bailed when I realized we wouldn't be using a hub dialer. That was probably just an excuse. I'm just not doing phone banking. I'm going to set up 40 envelopes instead, and maybe do some texting this evening. Or maybe not!

I worked out instead, which was great -- I walked the stairs in our building, up to 50 and down to 15, more than I've done before, and then did a few exercises in the living room.

Saturday, September 5

Henry and I were both up for a while last night. I was filled with dread and he was feeling like a bad person. He said he had read that the former head of Italy had died of coronavirus, but he couldn't remember where, and that sent us to our screens to (1) remember his goddamn name, and (2) figure out if he had died. It turns out that Berlusconi is in the hospital with covid-19 pneumonia, but he is still alive. Eventually we were able to cheer each other up enough to get back to sleep.

I just encountered a new term in an Atul Gawande article in the New

Yorker. *Testing is the only way to know whether a person is potentially contagious and in need of isolation. Such “[assurance testing](#)” has been required by countries such as [Iceland](#), [France](#), and [Germany](#) for travellers from abroad in order to avoid a mandatory two-week quarantine; by states from [Maine](#) and [Massachusetts](#) to [Hawaii](#) and [Alaska](#) for out-of-state travellers; [by many U.S. hospitals](#) for all patients admitted for non-emergent surgery; and [by the film and television industry](#), which plans to do regular testing of cast and crew members in order to start production again. The federal government has [recommended](#) that nursing homes test all staff once a week. Numerous colleges and universities have included repeated testing in their protocols for bringing students back to campus. Individuals are seeking assurance tests before visiting older family members.*

What he describes is familiar to me, but the term is new.

Rachel spent an hour last night talking about the recent revelations of Trump's dismissive language about military service. Really, it isn't anything we didn't already know about him, and it's in line with the things his fans like -- he speaks his mind, he isn't politically correct, and so forth. So far, most of the coverage of this story comes from people who already opposed him, so I don't know whether it will change any minds. It was acknowledged on Fox, apparently, so there's some chance. It's a perfect test case for the "choice pyramid" described by Carol Tavris on a recent interview on the Brain Science podcast. Found on the web: We start "at the top of the choice pyramid, facing a decision whose consequences are morally ambiguous. This first choice then starts a process of entrapment of action – justification – further action, which increases the intensity of our commitment. Over time our choices reinforce themselves and towards the bottom of the pyramid, we find ourselves rolling toward increasingly extreme views."

I'm still getting less done than I did before Wednesday, but that's ok. The sad thing is that I'm missing this beautiful day. I think I have some time now, but let me just jot down what's happened so far. I went to the Barrow St women's AA meeting, and that was very nice. Sheree called, feeling on edge because she had just passed through Bernardsville and seen a large parade of Trump supporters. Oh, NJ white people, you make us sad.



I set up 40 envelopes for the 2:00 call, but only finished 20 of them -- I spent some time helping a new person figure out the Vote Forward web page. I'm going to cook some beans later, but I think these cook fast, so I have time to go down to the river for a little while -- I'll see if Henry wants to go with me.

Have I mentioned the virus outbreak in Maine that started at a wedding? NBC news reports that there have now been 147 cases and 3 deaths. The people who died didn't attend the wedding, but contact tracers have been able to construct the tree that identified the source of their infections.

Sunday, September 6

I'm still pondering cognitive dissonance, and wondering if it can inform the extreme discomfort I sometimes feel when confronted with someone who holds an opinion different from mine. Someone at the AA meeting yesterday talked about getting doula training and being deeply uncomfortable when her instructor propounded a harm reduction theory for the treatment of addiction and, either implicitly or explicitly, criticized the abstinence model that is such a core tenet for those of us in AA.

Here's a definition of c.d. from the wikipedia page for Carol Tavris: *Cognitive dissonance is the state of discomfort one feels when two beliefs, or a belief and behavior, contradict each other, or, when a deeply held belief is disconfirmed by evidence.* This doesn't exactly capture the experience of two people in sharp disagreement, but perhaps we can add the dissonance we feel in situations when we want to be in full agreement with the other person but we can't get there, like the one described above.

And here we go: I just found a paper by Matz and Wood looking at that question. Here's the abstract: As L. Festinger (1957) argued, the social group is a source of cognitive dissonance as well as a vehicle for reducing it. That is, disagreement from others in a group generates dissonance, and subsequent movement toward group consensus reduces this negative tension. The authors conducted 3 studies to demonstrate group-induced dissonance. In the first, students in a group with others who ostensibly disagreed with them experienced greater dissonance discomfort than those in a group with others who agreed. Study 2 demonstrated that standard

moderators of dissonance in past research--lack of choice and opportunity to self-affirm, similarly reduced dissonance discomfort generated by group disagreement. In Study 3, the dissonance induced by group disagreement was reduced through a variety of interpersonal strategies to achieve consensus, including persuading others, changing one's own position, and joining an attitudinally congenial group.

But what about learning to tolerate the disagreement? That's the real challenge. This sheds light on something Ann Bastian said years ago at a PIC meeting. She was in front of the room, and someone in the audience said something that indicated profound disagreement with Ann's position. I no longer remember her exact words, but calmly acknowledged that she and the speaker disagreed. She wasn't defensive, she didn't reject or criticize the other woman. I remember being extremely impressed with her ability to hold the disagreement without either escalating or minimizing it.

Maybe cognitive dissonance in an individual facing disagreement with someone else is this: I want to feel that my position is right, but in this situation, I'm unable to avoid, dismiss, or minimize, which I believe are my usual tactics. I'm being forced to acknowledge that there's more than one valid point of view. I think of Ram Dass asking, "Do you want to be right, or do you want to be free?"

Still googling around. This is from another abstract: *Cognitive dissonance theory, as originally set out by Festinger (1957), described dissonance as an intraindividual phenomenon in a social context.*

Oh, cool! Festinger is the author of "When Prophecy Fails," and it was in researching the doomsday cult that he came up with the theory of cognitive dissonance.

From simplypsychology.org, which has a long discussion of cd (though not dissonance within a group): *Dissonance can be reduced in one of three ways: a) changing existing beliefs, b) adding new beliefs, or c) reducing the importance of the beliefs.* They also say: *There are also individual differences in whether or not people act as this theory predicts. Highly anxious people are more likely to do so. Many people seem able to cope with considerable dissonance and not experience the tensions the theory*

*predicts.*

Who knows, maybe cd isn't even the best way to understand fear of disagreement. Maybe thinking of it in terms of social anxiety is more useful. Some people even seem to use the term "conflict anxiety disorder."

I mapped some trees this morning -- the block of Hudson in front of the CVS, and a little tidying up of the block of Grand by 77 Hudson.

I continued kind of crashing this afternoon, after a couple of very busy weeks. I skipped two tai chi classes and spent hours on the couch, catching up on podcasts. Some really good ones -- an episode of Lexicon Valley (Slate) about the interrelatedness of Caribbean, South Carolina, and West African creoles; two episodes of Word of Mouth (BBC 4), one about black masculinity and another about protest slogans. And a light one -- Mike Birbiglia talking with Judd Apatow.

Monday, September 7, Labor Day

I slept until at least 8:00 and woke up feeling more energized. After breakfast, I went out for a cleanup walk and collected 8 small bags of trash, about half of which came from the shoreline at Morris Canal Park.

I was going to put up the voter registration posters at Hamilton Park, but Rock the Vote has not yet updated their site to link to New Jersey's new online voter registration. I notified them a couple of days ago, but it may take a little while.

From statnews.com: *In a highly unusual turn of events, eight vaccine makers — including some of the world's biggest companies — plan to issue their own public pledge not to seek government approval without extensive safety and effectiveness data on Tuesday. The article ends like this: The pharmaceutical industry is keenly aware that its reputation is also at stake as the pandemic becomes more and more politicized. / And simply put, that's not good for business.*

Whew, I just put stamps on all the 1340 letters I've prepared, and it took me three shows to get through them all -- "Can You Ever Forgive Me?," which

is a truly fine drama, "Disclosure," a documentary about representations of trans people in film and TV, also very good, and most of a Judah Friedlander standup special, which is pretty funny.

I set up my remaining 20 envelopes for today. I ordered more stamps, because it looks as though I'm going to continue writing letters until the last minute.

Tuesday, September 8

*On twitter: New @SDSUCHEPS paper by Dhaval Dave @FriedsonAndrew @Drew\_McNichols & Joe Sabia ("Contagion Externality of Super-spreader") finds Sturgis Motorcycle Rally was a local & nationwide spreader of COVID-19. Estimated public health cost: ~\$12B Followup tweet: We estimate that over 250,000 of the reported cases between August 2 and September 2 are due to the Sturgis Rally. Roughly 19 percent of the national cases during this timeframe.*

New term: cold chain. Keeping vaccines at the low temperatures necessary, much colder than an ordinary freezer, during storage and shipping.

Quiet day -- qigong at noon, letter-writing at 1:30, a walk along the water with Henry before dinner.

Wednesday, September 9

Angie's coming to clean in an hour, so Henry and I will visit a new park -- well, new to him: Lord Stirling.

Helen Branswell on twitter: At some point today, the number of confirmed [#Covid19](#) deaths globally will top 900,000 & the number of confirmed deaths in the U.S. will top 190,000. In 9 months.

We had a nice walk at the park, and we were glad I had brought insect repellent. That park is part of the Great Swamp, so mosquitoes are plentiful. After we got home, I finished the letters from yesterday's call and set up 40 envelopes for tomorrow. I hadn't thought I was going to keep

working on these letters this long, but it's clear I still am -- so I ordered 500 more return address stickers and another couple hundred stamps. One of these days I'll go to the post office to mail a box of #5 plastic to Preserve's Gimme 5 program, and maybe I'll buy more stamps there. (I used to recycle our #5 plastic at Whole Foods, but I haven't been in one of those stores since covid hit, so I have just continued to pile it up.)

The news today seems crazy again. Woodward has Trump on tape saying that he deliberately downplays the virus; the skies on the west coast are orange in the middle of the day from the fires, with several towns in Oregon "substantially destroyed" (Oregon governor Kate Brown); Senior DHS official says he was told to stop providing intelligence analysis on threat of Russian interference in election (WaPo headline); the AstraZeneca vaccine trial has been paused because a participant has inflammation of the spinal cord; a shooting in Jersey City last night. Rachel interviewed Michael Cohen last night about his new book. There were specific details we hadn't heard before, but I don't know if there were any surprises.

I went to the Hoboken women's AA meeting this evening, stayed for the business meeting, and ended up taking minutes and getting elected to chair the meeting in October. However, I might not be able to fulfill that commitment, because they may start meeting in person by then, and I won't join them in the room. It'll be interesting to see if they can pull off a hybrid meeting.

Thursday, September 10

It's going to be a busy day -- a training session to learn to text for Biden; a letter-writing session; tai chi class at night.

It's dark and rainy this morning, and the clouds are so low that the tops of the tall buildings in Manhattan are in another world.

There are over 1000 people on this training session! I'm set up on Thru Text and Slack, and all I need is to pick a time and get started. Parni took the training a few days ago, and maybe we can try it out together.

One small piece of good news today: There was virtually no flu season in

the southern hemisphere this year because of all the lockdowns.

I love this so much: [Emily Flake @EmilyFlake](#) Sometimes my daughter says “let’s marvelize the cat!” and then we lie down with the cat and pet him and tell him he is marvelous, the end

Rachel is paying particular attention to the whistleblower complaint about the suppression of intelligence alerts about Russian election interference, explicitly done because it made Trump look bad. And, like everybody else, she's covering the Woodward tapes where Trump said the very things about the virus that he was denying in public.

I had a workout before lunch, had a tiny lunch. (I'm trying to get serious about my covid weight gain. It isn't much, but it makes me uncomfortable.) I'll write letters with the MD group in a few minutes. Actually, I may as well get started early while I'm drinking my tea. I'll fire up TWiV to keep me company.

Whew, 40 more letters. I have 1,420 letters stamped and ready to go, and a few hundred more stamps on order. I thought I was going to be stopping at 1400, but clearly not.

Friday, September 11

I hadn't realized the date until I heard the bagpipes start up below us. I've heard a lone bagpipe occasionally, but this is more than one and a drum or so, and now I heard brass instruments and talking.

Someday maybe we'll have a coronavirus pandemic memorial ceremony.

Creepily, a bunch of boats flying Trump flags showed up across the river to parade in front of the memorial site. Biden, on the other hand, has suspended campaigning for today. (Well, so he says -- I bet all the fundraising emails keep coming!)

[Laurie Garrett @Laurie\\_Garrett](#) I'm now getting repts now from Southern states of co-infected [#flu](#) + [#COVID19](#) patients, in the ICU. Unfortunately, few of the hospitals have the ability to tell more than that it is Influenza-A,

so don't know yet whether it's H3N2 or H1N1. Waiting word on disease severity.

It's disturbing to hear that flu is around already. The southern hemisphere had a very light flu season, presumably a result of all the social distancing, but I don't know whether we're doing enough to put a big dent in it, with some governors still refusing to follow public health advice. I can't get my flu vaccine until 14 days after my second shot in the vaccine trial.

It has been confirmed that the AstraZeneca trial participant with the troubling side effect was in the experimental group, which makes me feel a bit relieved that I believe I'm in the control group.

We still have a ridiculous number of bananas because of an ordering mistake the other day. I've made chia seed banana pudding and banana muffins, and I'm trying to eat two bananas a day, but I think there are still 15 of them. I will freeze some for future smoothies or muffins, but perhaps not all.

I had two tai chi classes today, and then proceeded to do nothing for the rest of the afternoon.

covidtracking.com reports a jump nearly 800K tests, over 40K cases, over 1,000 deaths.

Saturday, September 12

There's a new Politico article documenting White House interference in the CDC, requiring them to bring their reports more in line with Trump's sunny view of the pandemic.

I see on twitter that the Oxford / AstraZeneca trial is restarting. "Details of the suspected adverse event will not be disclosed for confidentiality reasons but independent scrutiny has concluded it's safe for them to continue recruiting." Confirmed by Helen Branswell: The UK clinical trial of AstraZeneca's [#Covid19](#) vaccine has resumed. After a review of a possible adverse event that led to the pause, Britain's regulatory agency concluded it was safe to restart. No word yet when the US trial will restart.

I wasn't feeling good when I got up this morning, and this is exactly what happens to me every time I spend as many hours on the couch as I did yesterday. I feel better after attending the Barrow women's AA meeting -- less isolated, I guess.

I had a qigong class at 12, which was good, and then went for a walk. The weather is absolutely perfect -- breezy, dry, just over 70 degrees, a mix of sun and clouds. Sigh. Now I'm back, cooking some chickpeas and texting for Biden for the first time. My "assignment," as they call them, just got stopped or archived, and there were a bunch of people waiting for me to reply to them. What now?

I'll check again tomorrow, I guess. Nobody has their act together like Open Progress!

Sunday, September 13

[Eric Feigl-Ding @DrEricDing](#) New study of 60 [#COVID19](#) patients finds 55% were still displaying neurological symptoms during follow-up visits 3 months later. When compared brain scans to controls, brains of COVID patients showed changes that correlated w/ memory loss & smell loss.

Covid growing fast in India -- nearly 100,000 cases a day. Is it safe to assume that many people are not being tested? Al Jazeera: *India's health ministry says the surge in cases is due to an increase in daily testing that has now exceeded one million.* That's a poorly formed sentence. One million in total? One million every day??? Sure enough, the BBC says that India conducted one million tests on August 21, though that rate wasn't sustained on the following days. They're doing rapid antigen tests.

I did the new qigong "tuning" today, for the earth element, and attended Greg's qigong class at noon.

I'm still frustrated about my texting for Biden experience, but I have found where to go to see if anyone is responding to my questions. I told the moderator that I don't want to a new assignment until I find out what happened to all the people I texted yesterday! Are we just going to text



people and then ghost them? "I disapprove," I told her, like a proper fussy budget.

I'm still working on using up all our extra bananas, and there are now only 2 left, plus 7 in the freezer. Pudding, muffins, smoothies, bananas on almond butter on toast -- I can go through a lot of bananas.

I have time to listen to part of TWiV before sword class. Daniel Griffin says that teachers have already died in several states after schools have reopened. A new study shows that covid is a severe illness in 20% of people 18 to 34. Tests with low specificity should be administered more than once -- is that in the case of positive results or all results? Positives, I think, to eliminate false positives. He's giving a brief summary of all the types of vaccines: whole virus, inactivated and attenuated vaccines; viral vector vaccines; nucleic acid (DNA, RNA); protein-based vaccines. Immune system in a nutshell: B cells that make antibodies, T cells that detect if a cell has been infected and destroy it. How do you get B cells and T cells to work together? Dendritic cells. (This is all more detail than I require, so I'm only half listening while I try to explain to the texting moderator what happened to my assignment.) Now he's giving a plug for enrolling in virus trials, making me proud! He's hoping that one of the RNA vaccines (Moderna, Pfizer) is effective, because if they do, it will be easier to create vaccines in the future.

I sent out another 300 texts for Biden, and this time it was smooth -- a lot of people replied (more Republicans than Democrats, I fear), and I was able to respond to them all. Time to take a shower and check back once more before bedtime.

This is such a strange and historic time, and I'm pausing for a moment to ask myself how I'm rising to the moment. I'm responding to the virus well, I think -- volunteering for a trial, being compliant with social distance measures, occasionally sharing my views on social media. I'm responding to the political moment reasonably well -- working pretty diligently to get rid of Trump by donating money, writing letters, texting. I'm not really participating in the BLM moment, the next phase of the Civil Rights movement, so there's a major historical moment that I'm missing. I've been working to educate myself about racism in American history for a couple of

decades now, and learned a lot from books, podcasts, newspaper articles. I've given a little bit of money. But I haven't gone to any demonstrations. Maybe there's more I could do, and maybe that's something to turn my attention to after the election. Another thing I'm missing is the movement to fight global climate change, and that may be the most critical movement of all. What else could one be doing? Am I contributing to my community? I give some support to the Friends of Liberty State Park, I have started mapping trees in Jersey City, and I want to do a bit more before fall arrives.

I'm not sure where tai chi fits. For the most part, I'm in that community to support my own health, physical and mental; I'm glad my teaching and my work on the board helps others, but I don't think of it as creating a change in our culture. I believe in service, and I think it's part of the glue that holds society together, but I don't think of it as bringing change.

What I'm not doing is having fun, I'm sorry to say.

Monday, September 14

Qigong, breakfast, set up 40 envelopes for tomorrow. Suddenly remembered to drink a lot of fennel tea to ease my digestion. I took a walk along the river before my tai chi class, and had a very light lunch. I just did a 30-minute workout, and now I'm going to meet with Angie to talk about teaching tai chi together soon -- tomorrow? Maybe! If not, then next week.

I'll be texting for Biden with the Jersey City group at 6:30. ... Well, I thought I was, but they're taking the day off -- and so is Open Progress. So I finished most of the letters I set up earlier.

I had a zoom session with Angie to talk about how we would teach Fundamentals together, and I think we'll do fine.

In the evening, I went for a walk with Heather from the Saturday morning Barrow Mansion women's meeting. She's in town only to pack up her things and move them all back out to Salt Lake City, but she wanted to chat. It was a lovely evening for a walk -- I'm never out after dark these days, so it was a treat. The NYC skyline was gorgeous, with the Empire State Building a showing golden yellow light.

An usually sociable day, really!

Tuesday, September 15

I had a slow morning, watching last night's TV shows (Maddow, Daily Show, Colbert) and doing a couple of loads of laundry. Oh, and I had the pleasure of listening to a new Bugle podcast. I was ready for a quiet morning, it seems.

I think I finished 40 letters today, between the time before the call and the time on the call, then I had time for a walk along the river. The weather has definitely shifted -- I wore a light jacket and a scarf, and was actually a bit chilly until I warmed up. I think it was about 65 or so. I decided not to do any texting this evening, but to have a light evening. I watched a standup special on Netflix and then listened to an old episode of the Bugle.

Tomorrow I'm free until 4. I'll want to make sure I'm active during the day -- a workout, perhaps, and maybe repot a plant. I have to set up some letters for Thursday; maybe I'll do some texting.

Wednesday, September 16

Hurricane Sally, Category 2, is hitting the Gulf coast hard, with up to 30 inches of rain predicted for some places. Fires are still raging in the west, and the smoke is even affecting sunsets on the east coast. The northeast seems to be the only safe part of the country right now, because there are covid hotspots all over the midwest.

I had a satisfyingly productive morning -- repotted a plant, vacuumed the apartment, sorted out a mystery about AT&T benefits reimbursements for Henry. Also, it felt like time to make some more donations. I signed up to give \$150 a week to a Swing Left fund to support 10 candidates or so (Senate, House, state houses) and gave one-time \$100 donations to Andy Kim, Amy Kennedy, and Tom Malinowski, who all seem to be in close races.

Now I'm going to work out a bit before I have a light lunch.

I set up 40 envelopes for tomorrow's call (I'm over 1500 letters now) and then it was time for the NYSTCC board meeting. Whew. Dinner time.

Thursday, September 17

I'll have a quieter day today, I think. I have to type up the minutes from yesterday's board meeting; I have a letter-writing zoom at 2, and I'll go to George's 7:30 tai chi class, though I'm not teaching. In between, I could map some trees and/or put up some voter registration posters and/or do some texting.

I first saw reports on twitter that immigrant women in ICE camps were being sterilized against their will, and I hesitated to believe something so soul-killingly dreadful. Rachel confirmed that some women, at least, believe that is what was done to them, and there's a doctor who the women called the uterus collector. Most of them have been deported, so tracking them down and getting proper medical confirmation is going to be challenging.

The head of the CDC said at a Congressional hearing that it'll be well into next year before most Americans have easy access to a vaccine; this was immediately contradicted by the White House.

[Carl Zimmer @carlzimmer](#) Updates to the [@nytimes](#) Covid-19 treatment tracker include a disappointing randomized trial of convalescent plasma, an encouraging one for monoclonal antibodies, and a warning from experts about using blood filtration systems outside of trials

I mapped 11 trees on Hudson, between the light rail tracks and the street, and picked up a bag of trash while I was at it.

NYT: [India reports a record-high case tally: Nearly 98,000 new cases in one day; Stressing the effectiveness of local lockdowns, a W.H.O. official warns of a 'very serious' resurgence in Europe.](#)

Worldwide, there are more than 250,000 cases a day now. I don't hear a lot about South America, but on the NYT map, it looks like one big hot spot.

US cases are either flat at nearly 50,000 cases a day or even beginning to tick up.

Finished 35 letters, had dinner, and then attended George's PH1 form class. I guess I'll be helping Steve teach Eight Ways on Thursdays at 7:30 starting in a few weeks -- that should take about eight weeks, I would imagine -- and I'll be teaching with Angie on Tuesdays at 8:30 for about 3 months.

Friday, September 18

The news is full of fires and floods, White House interference in the CDC, Trump's disregard for American lives, Bill Barr's interference in the appropriate workings of the Justice Department. NYT headline: FBI Director Warns of Russian Interference and White Supremacist Violence.

I need a lighter day today -- it's been a very busy week.

Watching Rachel Maddow. She first reported on the WH interference in the CDC, putting things on their web site without allowing any review by CDC scientists. Then the new court ruling enjoining the USPS management from engaging in their new practices that slow the mail.

I went for a walk along the river this afternoon before dinner; catching up on the TV shows that had piled up over the last few days. And now I learn that Ruth Bader Ginsburg just died. It's not very human of me, I know, but the future of the Supreme Court is foremost in my mind. It's excruciating to see Mitch McConnell walk off with the triumph of another seat. I made a donation to Amy McGrath's campaign in honor of the moment.

I was taking the day off from political work, but now I'll set up my envelopes for tomorrow. If the addressee's name seems clearly female, I used the "Women Vote" stamps; others get the Bugs Bunny stamps.

Remember the CDC guidance published a week or so ago that asymptomatic people who had been exposed to SARS-Covid-2 should not get tested? It was just reversed.

ABC News @ABC BREAKING: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell,

in statement on passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, says, "President Trump's nominee will receive a vote on the floor of the United States Senate."

His excuse for this hypocrisy is very thin, attempting to differentiate this situation from what he did when Antonin Scalia died, denying Merrick Garland, Obama's nominee, a hearing.

The fight is on. Senator Ed Markey is already threatening that the Democrats will expand the Supreme Court. Some suggest that McConnell might hesitate before the election, and then approve a lame duck nominee if Biden wins. It's on, folks. Other people are throwing in the question of adding new states -- DC and Puerto Rico.

On twitter: In her oral dissent in *Shelby County v. Holder*, RBG quoted a familiar MLK Jr. line, but added her own coda. "The arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice," but only "if there is a steadfast commitment to see the task through to completion."

Rachel's interviewing Hillary about RGB and about what the Dems can do, and she's excellent.

Saturday, September 19

I was so sleepy when I went to bed that I fell asleep easily, but when I woke up after a few hours, it got tougher -- anxiety about the virus, anxiety about the state of the country, and even a feeling of loneliness and isolation. That comes from feeling excluded from Jeremy's family, but I was projecting way forward to some imagined future of living alone at the senior community after Henry's gone and feeling lonely and isolated. It took me a couple of minutes to see what I was doing. A little bit of dharma talk and I was back on track and back to sleep.

The Barrow St AA meeting this morning was lovely. I talked about missing Jeremy and Evan, and cried a bit. I'm still feeling pretty beat up after last night.

I could still do with a nap, but I think I'll try to get some exercise first. My

NYC letter-writing group didn't seem to be meeting today, but I found the same lovely Ohio group I found last time.

The exercise didn't happen, but I did have a lovely nap.

Sunday, September 20

Last night was better, but I still woke up restless early in the morning and had to turn to a dharma talk to settle myself.

After breakfast, I went to Hamilton Park to participate in a neighborhood cleanup. (It was also a good opportunity to put voter registration posters up on all the bulletin boards.) I spent most of my time cleaning up under a single overpass -- coat, comforter, pants, endless plastic. It was really gross over there. Now I'm back home in time to rest for a while before sword class.

The sword class was good, and so was the family zoom at 4. After dinner, I finally spent some time figuring out if I could use the living room for teaching evening tai chi classes. I think it'll work. I brought three new lights into the room, rolled the rug up halfway, and used the shoji screen.

We seem to have passed 200,000 covid deaths.

Monday, September 21

I ordered 50 postcards from Blue Wave. They focus on health care policy and are intended for NJ voters in Andy Kim's district.

Ed Yong just published an article about some of the unnerving effects of SARS-CoV-2, like myocarditis and the problems of the long haulers. He reports that doctors say we don't really know how many other viruses cause problems like those because the studies haven't been done.

On NBC: The Justice Department designated NYC, Portland and Seattle as "anarchist jurisdictions" under guidelines issued by President Trump earlier this month; Trump's Sept. 2 memo directs federal agencies to minimize funding for designated cities; Federal grants account for billions of

dollars of NYC's annual budget, and the city has threatened to sue over any move to defund it.

The CDC's web site acknowledged the possibility of aerosol spread the other day, but that statement has now been taken down.

Covid is on the rise in many European countries -- Spain, France, Austria, the UK, Czech Republic which handled it so well for so long. South America is still almost all red on the NYT map. India's got over 90,000 cases a day. Within the US, cases are rising in over half the states again, though most of the states with the highest numbers of cases in the midwest and west. Someone I talked with this afternoon told me that there had been a super-spreading event in Chatham, NJ, at a party involving high schoolers and their parents, and roughly 25 cases have been confirmed. NJ.com confirms this, and says the number is nearly 30.

Henry got a haircut today, his first professional haircut since March, at a little place on Grove St. He said there were no other customers in there, so he felt reasonably safe.

I signed on to the NJ-08 texting and phone banking event, but it was pretty disorganized and I wanted to check out the Vote Forward event at 7:30, so I bailed. The Vote Forward event isn't very compelling, really, but I finished 20 letters, printed 40 more, and then cleaned up the kitchen. Maybe I'll put on the news and write some more. Nah, too close to bedtime. I'll listen to a podcast and do some crocheting.

Tuesday, September 22

I skipped my noon qigong class, having started the day with qigong, and set up envelopes for the 1:30 letter-writing session instead. Went for a walk along the river before dinner.

I start teaching Fundamentals (or Integration, as they call it in the Seattle orbit) with Angie H tonight, a small class of her regular students in Portland, OR.

I guess we didn't officially hit 200,000 deaths the other day, because



they're announcing it today. The real toll is doubtless higher, as is the number of deaths that might be considered collateral damage.

Teaching with Angie was great. It turns out I have a lot to say as a Fundamentals teacher when I don't have the senior teachers breathing down my neck! And she's used to teaching alone, so she loved having company to share the responsibility and the direction of class. We did a pretty good job of picking up on each other's themes, I think, and the students seemed to appreciate it.

Wednesday, September 23

I went to Mt. Sinai this morning for my second shot. Polly keeps forwarding to me accounts she finds saying that most people aren't having reactions to the Pfizer shot, so maybe I got the real thing after all. Who knows? Anyway, it was good to have a chance to take a walk in Central Park afterwards -- it's another gorgeous day.

I can get my flu shot two weeks from today, so any time after October 7. I can get other vaccines, if necessary, 28 days from today.

The police who killed Breonna Taylor are not going to be prosecuted. There will be trouble. Actually, one was charged, but not for killing her -- for shooting wildly into neighbors' apartments. It's not a satisfying decision, to say the least.

Thursday, September 24

Well, maybe I'm not in the control group after all. I was up for an hour or so in the middle of the night with abdominal pain -- mostly bloating and nausea. I thought I might have a low fever, but I didn't. I took Pepto Bismol and did the two tai chi digestive massages, finished reading the Grapevine, and listened to a dharma talk. All that got me back to sleep. But maybe it's nothing to do with the vaccine, and it's just the extreme tension of these times. Back to the fennel tea.

I'm hearing some kind of chanting from my window (at 7:15 am!) but I can't even tell which side of the river it's on, let alone what the demonstrators (if

any) are chanting about. Pro-police? Anti-police? I did see a small pro-police event going on near the 9/11 memorial along the JC waterfront a couple of weeks ago. And now I learn that it's right in front of my building. Lisa McAllister from SEIU 32BJ just sent email: *Good morning, by now you may have heard a little bit of noise outside your window. Sorry I was not able to tell you before, but the Planned Companies workers in your building as well as 6 others in Hudson/Essex counties are on strike starting this morning against unfair labor practices committed by their employer and the employer's failure to even entertain providing them a small hourly supplement or some extra paid sick days during this pandemic.*

Well, this is disturbing: [Eric Feigl-Ding @DrEricDing](#) RE-INFECTION UPDATE: 15 cases of formal reinfection has now been documented (genome sequence comparison). The BNO tracker now includes more severity info —8 of the 15 had a 2nd infection that's more severe, 4 of which were moderate to severe.

NYT coronavirus vaccine tracker: 28 in phase 1, 15 in phase 2, 10 in phase 3. They're from all over the world. There's quite a variety of approaches now: genetic vaccines (RNA, mRNA, DNA), eg Moderna and Pfizer; viral vector vaccines, eg, Astra Zeneca, the Russian vaccine, the J&J vaccine now starting phase 3 clinical trials; protein-based vaccines, eg Novavax, Sanofi; inactivated or attenuated virus vaccines; repurposed vaccines (like BCG).

I had a brief workout this morning. I have to remember how helpful it is in releasing tension!

Preston took the PATH train from NYC to come see us, and we went out for lunch at Uncle Momo on Grove St. This was the first time Henry and I have eaten out since March. It was great to see Preston and exciting to have a visitor, any visitor! We ate outdoors, at the tables in the street. Like NYC, cities in NJ have closed streets in order to allow people to eat in the open air.

I was late for my 2:00 letter-writing zoom with the Maryland group, but I managed to finish 20 letters, and then I needed a nap after my rocky night last night. I had a smoothie for dinner and then it was time to set up for the

7:30 tai chi class.

Now I get to watch tv for a while.

Friday, September 25

I'm in good spirits this morning. My moods are mysterious to me -- one morning I'm full of doom and the other morning I'm filled with happiness. I did some extra tai chi as part of my qigong workout, and had a nice walk along the Hudson.

I heard a lovely interview on the TWiV podcast while I walked, and sent the following email to the board and management of my building:

*I encourage you to listen to the first hour of this podcast, in which a group of academic virologists interview David Brenner, the director of the Center for Radiological Research at Columbia. He describes a new technology using Far-UVC lamps to kill viruses -- this particular wavelength of light kills aerosolized viruses without harming humans.*

<https://www.microbe.tv/twiv/twiv-666/>

*They began their research studying influenza and have now extended it to coronaviruses. Here's a link describing their work: <https://www.crr.columbia.edu/research/using-power-light-preventing-airborne-spread-coronavirus-and-influenza-virus>*

*The Columbia scientists aren't alone in studying this technology, either. People are beginning to install these Far-UVC lamps in elevators and other group settings. I could imagine them in our building in the elevators, and they would make it safer to reopen the gym.*

*In case you worry that it would bathe everything in blue light, that is unlikely -- this wavelength of light is invisible. Regular UV light is also invisible, but color is added to make sure we don't forget it's on -- regular UVC light is harmful, unlike Far-UVC.*

I was all set to do some texting this afternoon, but neither the Biden text

site nor the Open Progress site has any texts available! So I'll work on letters while I watch the news. Vote Forward, amazingly enough, is up to 8.35 million letters stockpiled and ready to go. Hey, under an hour later it's 8.36 million. And now 8.38. And now 8.40 million! This is amazing. That's, what, 50K letters in a couple of hours?

My 50 postcards to send to voters in Andy Kim's district arrived today, and I've addressed more than half of them. After that, I'll go back through the pile and add a note and a stamp. I'll surely have them in the mail by Monday. If they need more people to write them, I can order another batch then.

So I wasn't able to text, but I feel satisfied with the amount of work I managed to do.

Saturday, September 26

Henry figured out a remarkable thing yesterday. About a 5-minute walk from our senior community is an old building called the 1860 House. This building is so nearby that, looking at a map, you'd think it might be part of the same property.

The 1860 House is the site of the 24 club, which has the following mission statement: "The 24 Club was formed to assist persons in the central New Jersey counties of Mercer, Somerset and Middlesex in their recovery from substance abuse problems. It does so by furnishing and maintaining physical facilities for 12-Step meetings, education and social uses." It seems to have AA meetings every day of the week, morning, noon, and night.

In about 40 minutes, I'll head over to the Morris Canal Park to check in for a neighborhood cleanup. Later today, I have a zoom call to write letters, and that's when I can probably finish my Andy Kim postcards.

I'm going to keep checking the Vote Forward count frequently now -- it's at 8.5 million, so it went up another 100K while I slept. And now, in the afternoon, 8.61 million.

I went to the Paulus Hook cleanup this morning and spent most of my time working on the shoreline around the Morris Canal Park. I'm good and tired now, and stiff. I was pleased that I had brought the When We All Vote posters with me, because James Solomon, who was staffing the table for the group running the cleanup, asked me for a few. He said that someone had actually registered to vote at a previous cleanup!

After a good shower and lunch, I signed in to the Upper West Side Vote Forward letter-writing group. There were 4 or 5 people new to letter-writing, and I was able to send pdf files of 20 letters to three people who hadn't yet been approved. Then I finished my postcards for Andy Kim, and I'll take them to the post office on Monday.

The estimate of the virus reproduction rate in NJ has been running over 1 for the few weeks. It just dropped from 1.15 to 1.12, but I wonder if that isn't too many decimal places for the certainty of this number. The daily positivity rate for tests was 2.22%; again, probably too many decimal places.

Just finished a social zoom event with college friends, and now it's nearly bedtime.

Whew.

Sunday, September 27

NYT: On Saturday, [India](#), the world's second-most populous nation, continued to lead in daily virus-related deaths, with about 7,700 over the most recent seven-day period. [The United States](#) is second, with more than 5,000, [Brazil](#) third with more than 4,800, and [Mexico](#) fourth with nearly 3,000. Those four countries account for more than half of the world's total deaths from the virus, according to the Times database. / New hot spots are also emerging in smaller countries like Israel, which led the world in new cases per capita over the past week. ... / The pandemic continues to wreak havoc in South America, where countries including Argentina, Colombia and Peru are recording thousands of new cases daily along with some of the highest numbers of deaths per capita in the world. / ... In Europe, second waves of infections have already [hit] [Britain](#), [Spain](#) and

[France](#).

California still has half a dozen active fires. There are ten active fires in Oregon, and it looks as though there are active fires in Washington, Idaho, Montana, Colorado. They've all fallen off our front pages in the east, but google and ye shall find.

I drove over to Berry Lane Park to staff the voter registration table at the Kemet festival. My shift was 4 to 6, and I think things had quieted down by then -- or maybe it was fairly quiet all day. We were at the entrance to the vendor area, with the extra job of distributing masks and bottles of water -- oh, and encouraging people to respond to the census. That made it pleasantly sociable. I registered only two people, a father and his 17-year-old daughter, and I helped one guy think about how to fill out his mail-in ballot. One of the people staffing the table before me compared the task to fishing, and I like that -- mostly you sit there quietly, tossing out your questions when people walk by, and every now and then you catch a fish.

It was my first visit to Berry Lane Park, too, and I was impressed. It's a significant achievement for a mayor, I think, to open a good-sized new park in a minority and working-class neighborhood.

Monday, September 28

Let's see, what are my goals for today? I just filled in my ballot, so I can deliver that to the drop box in front of City Hall. It seems kind of crazy to be voting in September, but I like it. My only regret is that I can't vote in Senate elections in all the swing states! I also want to go to the post office, bringing my 50 postcards for Andy Kim and the big box of #5 plastic I've been accumulating since February, because Jersey City doesn't recycle it -- it gets mailed to Preserve for their "Gimme 5" program. Then tonight, there's a zoom session of phone banking, texting, and letter-writing. I'm hoping I can text for Open Progress or for the Biden team -- the last time I tried, there weren't any texts available in either program.

Vote Forward passed 9 million letters!

[Dr. Ali Nouri](#) [@AliNouriPhD](#) Good news from [@WHO](#) : rapid test approved,

will start delivering to low/middle-income countries. It's a 15 min test and costs \$5. Road to safe reopening runs through each of us taking daily tests to determine if we go out or stay home This is great start, needs more \$ to ramp up

I don't know anything about that rapid test, but I bet I'll be hearing more soon. I haven't heard of these either: [Governor Phil Murphy @GovMurphy](#) NEW: Following discussions over the weekend with the [@WhiteHouse](#) about rapid-testing resources for New Jersey, we've secured 2.6 million BinaxNOW rapid tests – significantly scaling up our testing capabilities. The first 170,000 tests will come within the next two weeks. [They're from Abbott and they take 15 minutes, but require a health care worker with a reagent, so they're not the home tests we've been waiting for, but they're definitely quick.]

The other big discussion on twitter and FB has been about the new NYT article about Donald Trump's tax returns -- somebody leaked several years' worth to them. He hardly pays taxes at all because he manages to declare so many losses; he's in a dispute with the IRS about a \$73 million refund he tried to take ten years ago. Other investigations are sure to follow.

Fires are everywhere this year. From nature.com: *Infernos in South America's Pantanal region have burnt twice the area of California's fires this year. Researchers fear the rare ecosystem will never recover.* This is a flood plain in western Brazil, which has been experiencing a severe drought.

I finally get to do some texting on the Jersey City zoom. Some people are calling for Andy Kim and some are texting with the Ohio Democrats. I've sent out 200 texts and I'm just fielding responses; I probably won't ask for another 100. I'll just keep working on letters while I wait for responses.

Tuesday, September 29

There have now been over one million confirmed deaths caused by SARS-CoV-2 worldwide.

Twitter can be truly exhausting, with its parade of distressing, infuriating,

outrageous headlines. Unneeded gynecological surgeries at ICE facilities; the complex chain of data and freezers needed to administer the mRNA vaccines; Trump's apparent money laundering at his golf courses; more that I already forgot. Time to turn away for a while.

Here's better news: Vote Forward is up to 9.37 million letters. I've got 60 waiting to be completed, and I'll be receiving 100 more postcards for Andy Kim that I'll prepare and mail as quickly as I can.

covidactnow.org is a site I haven't seen before. They're modelers from several academic institutions, including Georgetown, Stanford, and Harvard. I was poking around to find out NJ's test positivity rate, which this site reports as 1.9%. The troubling number is the estimated Rt, which has been around 1.1 for several weeks now -- they report 1.13 for NJ overall and 1.06 for Hudson County. I think I saw on the news that the largest number of new cases is in Ocean County, and this site reports their Rt (which they're calling the infection rate) as 1.37, by far the highest in the state.

NY is experiencing an uptick larger than NJ's, some of which is attributed to behavior in orthodox Jewish communities.

I finished 30 letters at the zoom call this afternoon -- a few less than usual, because I was busy downloading pdf packets of letters to send to other callers who have not yet been approved. So many volunteers showing up for everything these days! I also registered for an Ohio text banking call this Saturday afternoon.

From The Economist: "It took 140 days to go from 1,000 to 500,000 deaths; but just 91 days to reach 1m. At current rates, another 500,000 people are likely to die within the next 75 days."

Angie decided to shorten last night's class so we could all watch the debate, so we just reviewed bringing attention to the feet. I did tune in to the debate, but I could only stand it for a few minutes, and I'm sure I wasn't alone. Trump's strategy, if I can call it that, seemed to be to interrupt both Biden and the moderator constantly, bulldozing and insulting, throwing out lies.



Two terms that are new to me, both of which remind me of Trump's way of arguing:

Kettle logic. According to wikipedia, this was coined by Jacques Derrida after a story told by Sigmund Freud. *Freud relates the story of a man who was accused by his neighbour of having returned a kettle in a damaged condition and the three arguments he offers.*

1. *That he had returned the kettle undamaged*
2. *That it was already damaged when he borrowed it*
3. *That he had never borrowed it in the first place*

*Though the three arguments are inconsistent, Freud notes that it is so much the better, as if even one is found to be true then the man must be acquitted.*

Pleading in the alternative. That's the term Henry learned in law school for that technique. According to wikipedia again, *Alternative pleading (or pleading in the alternative) is the legal term in the [law of the United States](#) for a form of [pleading](#) that permits a party in a court action to argue multiple possibilities that may be [mutually exclusive](#) by making use of [legal fiction](#). .... At a late 1970s [American Bar Association](#) seminar in New York, [Richard "Racehorse" Haynes](#) gave this example: "Say you sue me because you say my dog bit you. Well, now this is my defense: My dog doesn't bite. And second, in the alternative, my dog was tied up that night. And third, I don't believe you really got bit. And fourth, I don't have a dog."*

Instead of watching more than a few minutes of that mess, I addressed 50 postcards to Andy Kim voters and kept an eye on twitter. Henry and I stayed up long enough to watch a bit of the commentary on tv and in the press. The consensus seems to be that it was a depressing and degrading spectacle for which Trump is wholly to blame. Biden "won," if you can call it that, but getting a few points in and by not being an off-the-wall bully. A key event took place when the moderator asked Trump to denounce white supremacy. He said he would but then didn't, and instead of telling the Proud Boys to step down, he told them to "stand back and stand by," which has apparently excited them no end.

Wednesday, September 30

Henry and I both had fearful dreams last night. I woke up at 5:30 dreaming that Deray McKesson was in his apartment tangled up in furniture somehow, unable to move, and possibly having difficulty breathing. Since he has no doubt chanted, "I can't breathe" many hundreds of times, that was a little too spot on. (It also resembles the other dreams about a man in danger I've been having ever since I was in my mid twenties and beginning to truly experience my grief and pain about my father's death when I was 15.)

And it's been a domestic morning -- vacuuming, washing the sheets. While the second load is drying, I caught up on TV shows and finished the first batch of Andy Kim postcards. I'll take them to the post office this afternoon -- which has turned out to be absolutely beautiful now that the clouds have cleared. It's been a bit warm and humid the past few days, and now it's cooling again.

I'm looking at an interesting article in the Atlantic that deepens our understanding of the importance of super-spreading events. He [who?] starts by noting that  $R$ , the transmission rate, is modified by  $k$ , the dispersion -- that is, how much variation there is in the number of cases caused by each infected person. Influenza has a low dispersion while SARS-CoV-2 has high dispersion -- roughly 20% of people cause 80% of the cases. While the degree of spreading may be an attribute of a person, it is definitely a function of how many crowded indoor events take place. Emphasizing super-spreading events changes the contact tracing strategy, because it means that backward tracing is more useful, seeking to identify such an event. It also changes our understanding of the strategies employed by different countries, because some (like Japan and Korea) focussed on clusters quite early.

*According to CNBC, Joe Biden and his party scored a huge fundraising windfall during and after Tuesday night's acrimonious debate with President Trump. / The Democratic fundraising website ActBlue processed close to \$8 million between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m., according to the site's live ticker.*

We don't have a report from Republican fundraisers.

Vote Forward has reached 9.78 million letters and set a new goal of 15 million. I think they'll make it, the way new volunteers have been pouring in.

Ooh, I like this: "I am not optimistic or pessimistic. I am determined."  
-@staceyabrams.

I just attended the Wednesday night Hoboken women's meeting, and it turns out I have committed to chair for 3 months. I'm not sure I realized that! That shouldn't be a problem, except that I have to come up with 3 speakers.

Thursday, October 1

Yes, October! Wow.

I have some dread about several things, on very different scales -- on a large scale, the election and the course of SARS-CoV-2; on a more personal scale, the impending winter, with less friendly weather and increasing darkness, and the decline of political activity, which might leave me at loose ends a lot and feeling isolated. I tell myself that the political work does not have to stop -- there will always be more to do, even if we sweep this election. And I remind myself that I have already remade my life a few times since retirement, and I'm getting pretty good at it.

Frankly, I don't think about the virus nearly as much as I do about the election. I have organized my life around our new limitations, and it's working pretty well for now. I don't have to live alone; I don't work and I don't have kids in school; I don't have a very rich social life that the virus is preventing from happening. I miss Jeremy and Evan most of all. If Biden is inaugurated successfully in January, though, I may start thinking about the virus quite a lot again. I do think it will be hanging over my head for the rest of my life. It could take several years for a truly effective vaccine to appear -- and that may never happen, in which case it will take at least a couple of generations for it to become truly endemic and significantly less harmful.

I wrote the addresses on 50 postcards for Andy Kim; I'll add the notes and

the stamps on the 2:00 zoom call, and then I can take them to the post office afterwards.

... dropped off the postcards, then took a walk to Van Vorst Park and a bit beyond. I went to George's tai chi class this evening; now watching Rachel Maddow before bed. Sometimes that's a bad idea -- let's see how it goes tonight.

Hope Hicks is apparently back in the White House, and she has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. NYT: "She traveled with Mr. Trump to the presidential debate in Ohio on Tuesday and accompanied him aboard Air Force One to Minnesota for a campaign rally on Wednesday night."

Friday, October 2

We wake up to the news that Trump and Melania have both tested positive. And my Politico daily mail says: 'Trump was in Bedminster yesterday, where according to the [Washington Post](#), he held a fundraiser and roundtable discussion where he was “in close contact with dozens of other people” — after the White House knew that Hope Hicks, whom he had traveled with, had symptoms.'

This makes me feel that there might just be some justice in the world. This is not a particularly sensible thought, just an emotional reaction.

So many people are fighting the spite and schadenfreude, but I find it very difficult. I won't be noisy about it, but inside, I'm with Hari Kondabolu, who is spilling jokes: Just remember that even Trump is somebody's child. My thoughts are with Satan at this time. / I know People Of Color are disproportionately affected by COVID... but I didn't think orange counted. / I hope the President is ok. Michelle, Malia & Sasha too.

[Andy Slavitt @ASlavitt](#) About 43,000 other Americans got COVID-19 today, many without the choice of being in close and unsafe proximity to others.

So many different takes!

[Pej Vahdat @pejvahdat](#) I'm telling you he doesn't have it. It changes the narrative from being a racist, he doesn't have to debate again and he gets

the sympathy vote. MARK MY WORDS!

[Norman Ornstein](#) [@NormOrnstein](#) I was there in the debate hall. The entire Trump entourage came in w masks, took them off as soon as they sat down, refused to put them on when asked by Cleveland Clinic personnel. Flouting defiantly the law & rules. And Trump shouting only 8-10 feet from Biden for 90 mins. Oy

[Garry Kasparov](#) [@Kasparov63](#) It takes a lot to impress a Russian with surprises in October, but this one is off to a rather impressive start.

Well. It's going to be harder than ever to concentrate today. How shall I spend my time? I have tai chi classes at 12 and 1, and that's it. I'm text banking tomorrow and Monday. Maybe I'll set up my 40 envelopes now and decide later whether to seek some other text banking opportunities. The Biden campaign has decided to start canvassing, so the NY group is surely going to dive in. I might stick with virtual activities, which Henry would clearly prefer.

Pence and Pompeo have tested negative, though obviously they need more testing; the chair of the RNC tested positive.

[marc maron](#) [@marcmaron](#) its not karma, it's stupidity

I just threw out another blue pen -- I've gone through three of them doing Vote Forward letters.

Republican Senator from Utah Mike Lee tested positive. The president of Notre Dame, who attended the Amy Coney Barrett announcement last Saturday without a mask, has tested positive.

The Bidens are negative so far, but they should certainly get tested at least once more.

The Republicans are now worried about whether this virus outbreak is going to interfere with their goal of putting Coney Barrett on the Supreme Court before the election.

OK, 40 envelopes set up, letters written for 20 of them. It felt necessary to

do some work on the election today.

Trump is being flown to Walter Reed "for a few days." He hasn't handed power to Pence. Allegedly, he's going to get an experimental medical treatment -- a Regeneron antibody cocktail, still in clinical trials. WaPo: *Trump's physician, Dr. Sean Conley, said Trump also was taking zinc, vitamin D, an antacid called famotidine, melatonin and aspirin. None of those have been proven to be effective against COVID-19. (They don't sound particularly risky, either.)*

[Laurie Garrett @Laurie\\_Garrett](#) There is good reason to think that a mini-outbreak of [#SARSCoV2](#) occurred [sic] on Sept. 26 [@WhiteHouse](#) Rose Garden [#SCOTUS](#) nomination of [#AmyConeyBarrett](#) . So far nine people who attended have tested +, including 4 who all sat in 1st 3 rows & 3 reporters.

What a remarkable day. I have had an urge to eat all day long, and it took me a while to remember that's often a sign of fatigue. Henry told me at about 6am, when we both happened to be awake, that Trump and Melania had tested positive. I asked him if he was reporting a dream, but no -- and then there was no way I could go back to sleep, so up I got and started hanging around on twitter. I took a nap at 4, and that was good.

Biden has pulled negative ads; the Trump team will not do the same. Not a surprise.

Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) just tested positive. He's asymptomatic -- or asymptomatic, as somebody misspelled that on twitter early today. He's a member of the Judiciary Committee.

The covid tracking project reports increases in hospitalizations in 30 states, mostly in the midwest and northeast (esp NJ and CT, judging from the data display).

[Jesse Lehrich @JesseLehrich](#) so POTUS, FLOTUS, the GOP Chair, 2 Senators, Hope Hicks, 3 WH reporters, a WH press aide, the Notre Dame president, & 11 people involved in debate set-up have now tested positive.

There may have been two distinct super-spreading events, then -- the Rose Garden celebration and the debate.

Unconfirmed: Kellyanne Conway's daughter says her mom has covid. That's on twitter; she posted on tik tok. Confirmed by Conway herself. She was at the Rose Garden ceremony.

Saturday, October 3

The cluster continues to grow -- Trump's campaign manager has tested positive.

Trump is being treated as a bit of a guinea pig, it seems -- first the experimental monoclonal antibody cocktail, and now Remdesivir, too.

Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI) has tested positive. He's a wild card -- he wasn't part of the debate or the SCOTUS event, but everybody's getting tested now.

Ooh, this is good: [Ari Drennen @AriDrennen](#) I can count on my fingers the number of times since March I've seen my friends because I was told that was how we could keep vulnerable people alive and these fucking people were just carrying on like power is a vaccine and privilege is a mask.

Chris Christie just announced that he has tested positive.

I enjoyed my AA meeting this morning, and I managed to attend my 3-hour tai chi class, though my concentration was abysmal. I'll be texting for two hours starting at 4, and now I signed up for a texters' rally at 8.

News people and people on twitter are going crazy over the timeline of Trump's illness, and what exact symptoms he had when, and so on. I'm sure it matters, but I'm not going to get too worked up about it.

Whew, just finished my texting shift. There were a <lot> of friendly responses. I signed up for three more shifts with this group, and I'll be texting on Monday evenings as well.

I just went to the online rally. It was led by a few young people, with Julian Castro as the guest. They said that there are 34K volunteers texting for Biden/Harris, and they've sent 62 million texts so far, with about 2M texts going out each day now. Of course the purpose of the event was to pump everybody up to work even harder for the next month.

Sunday, October 4

Trump's personal attendant, Nick Luna, has tested positive.

They actually recorded SNL in the studio last night. Favorite line so far: "Imagine science and karma teamed up to send a message about the danger of Covid-19 ..."

Apparently Trump is now on dexamethasone as well. He's getting everything, despite their saying that he's not sick enough to need it all. His treatment isn't making a lot of sense to the medical people on twitter.

And I'm supposed to be paying attention to my Eight Ways class, but I'm still distracted. I left early and went for a lovely walk along the Hudson.

I signed in to a marathon postcard and letter-writing zoom session from somewhere around Chicago, and worked on letters for a while.

Monday, October 5

Everybody on twitter and in the news is trying to work out the timeline of Trump's infection and the details of his treatment, and the WH and the doctors are being cagy. That will continue, I imagine. Nobody new has announced an infection, and we have to wait up to two weeks from the debate, I imagine, for the last shoe to drop -- no, from the Westminster fundraiser five days ago. Biden will be getting tested every day or two until two weeks from the debate, I'm sure, and I can't imagine the chaos if he tests positive.

I should have a pretty quiet day today -- a tai chi class at 1, a phone and text bank at 6:30.



I went out for a cleanup walk. One bag mostly at Morris Canal Park -- plus a bucket I found and filled. A second bag on the block of York by the Post Office. And came home to learn that another WH staffer has tested positive -- this time Kayleigh McEnany, the press secretary. According to one reporter's tweet, there are now 29 people who have tested positive -- the ones whose names we know and 2 assistant press secretaries, 3 WH reporters, and 11 debate staff.

Another pastor who attended the SCOTUS Rose Garden event just tested positive, someone from Riverside, California.

It's not often on the front pages any more, but the fires in California are still going on. Apparently there's a thing called a gigafire, which burns more than 1 million acres, and the "August Complex" has done that.

NYT has just reported that two WH housekeeping staff members have tested positive.

The CDC has officially acknowledged the role of aerosols in transmitting SARS-CoV-2.

I had fun texting Ohio Democrats for 2 hours -- they were very enthusiastic and responsive, and I might have lined up a few volunteers.

Tuesday, October 6

I woke up at 5 or 6, filled with tension. I was thinking about how vulnerable I feel when I really want something with my whole heart. I haven't often allowed myself to feel that way, really. It reminded me of trying to become pregnant twenty-five or six years ago. I specifically recall deciding to want it, and to really try for it instead of being open to it or allowing it to happen. I had to choose that because it took work -- I had to give myself injections in the butt, and it was a rather complicated challenge.

I tried saying AA's steps to help myself relax, and I noticed what bothers me about the steps -- there's an enormous emphasis on our wrongdoing and almost no emphasis on our pain. That seems like quite an oversight, really, because it's our inability to abide our own pain that makes so many

of us pick up a drink.

Trump left the hospital last night, telling us not to be afraid of the coronavirus. It may be ignoble of me, but I hope he gets sicker. I think it would be bad for America if his glibness prevails. Doctors are commenting on twitter that his difficulty breathing is apparent in videos of his appearance on the WH balcony.

The WH has blocked new vaccine guidelines proposed by the FDA, which is trying to ensure that any new vaccine will be safe and effective. I can't really bear to read the details of this stupidity. The chairman and CEO of Pfizer, on the other hand, tweeted: Pfizer has never discussed @US\_FDA's #COVID19 vaccine guidelines with the White House and will never do so as it could undermine the agency's independence.

My Ohio conversations from last night hadn't been reassigned yet, so I could keep going with a few people.

A couple of military aides to Trump have tested positive. And now at least 7 top military officials are in quarantine after the head of Coast Guard tested positive.

Finished off a bunch of letters on the 1:30 call.

A few hours later, the WH backed down on the vaccine guidelines.

Trump called off negotiations on a new virus relief package. And why does McConnell accede to that request? They both care only about the SCOTUS nominee, apparently.

Stephen Miller just tested positive. Wow. It couldn't happen to a nicer guy.

Wednesday, October 7

Now Trump wants a relief package. He's more erratic than usual, which some people are attributing to the steroid, but it seems to me it could just as well be from the way he's tanking in the polls. He's losing the support of white college-educated women and old people. I think he's got nobody left

but white men, demographically speaking.

Teaching with Angie last night was quite a lift for my spirits. I enjoy it and it makes me feel competent, as well as grateful for the relief from obsessing about politics 16 hours a day. Yesterday I remembered the meditation on the "guardians" introduced at the first tai chi training. That meditation was fanciful, involving a dragon in a green forest to the east, a white tiger in the snowy mountains to the west, a fiery red phoenix in the south, and a blue turtle in the icy northern waters. But I added the medical people watching over our health, and I list every role I can think of, and toss in vaccine researchers, virologists, public health experts, and so on, even all the people who are complying with social distancing and wearing masks. And all the other people helping keep us sane -- the organizers of AA meetings, my tai chi teachers. Then I add the people who are protecting our democracy, from the politicians I admire to the army of hard-working volunteers like me who are organizing zoom calls, writing letters and postcards, calling, text banking, and marching in the streets with the Black Lives Matter movement. And the people trying to fight our abuses of the climate! -- all the great kids in the Sunrise Movement! It reminds me how big the movement is that I'm part of, and that I can let go of any feeling of weight on my shoulders.

I'm still thinking about AA and pain. I also remember rage being a troubling emotion for me in those early days of sobriety, dealing with being dumped after a ten-year relationship. Prior to starting therapy and quitting drinking, my only strategy for dealing with troubling emotions was to damp everything down as best I can. Don't want anything too much because you'll be disappointed. Don't feel bad about other people's behavior, because what can you expect? Minimize, minimize.

I set up my 40 envelopes for tomorrow. I'm damn tired of writing letters, but I think I could address envelopes for another 3 months. :^)

I just chaired my first meeting of the Hoboken women's group, with my old friend Polly as the speaker. It was really lovely. There's something about chairing, it seems, that really makes a person focus. I found the meeting quite moving.

ABC News got an internal memo from FEMA saying, 'The coronavirus outbreak has infected "34 White House staffers and other contacts" in recent days, according to an internal government memo, an indication that [the disease has spread](#) among more people than previously known in the seat of American government.'

I watched about a half hour of the VP debate, so I got the flavor of it, and then I had enough. Somebody just tweeted that Mike Pence seems to have pinkeye, which is sometimes a covid symptom. At least he's not a shouter, so maybe he's not spraying virus particles all over Kamala and the debate moderator. He is a relentless talker, though, and boring as hell.

Thursday, October 9

NYT: After a Hospital Stay for Covid, Many Face Months of Rehabilitation / Many patients who were critically ill with Covid-19 face arduous recoveries, often requiring extensive physical rehabilitation.

*The Detroit News: Feds say they thwarted militia plot to kidnap [Governor Gretchen] Whitmer*

Someone just dredged up a tweet from Trump dated April 17 saying simply, "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!" Somebody took him seriously. Two of the people charged today are visible in photos taken when armed terrorists charged into the Michigan State government building on April 30. That is deeply chilling.

Cases are still rising in New Jersey. Murphy just reported several outbreaks related to public schools. Hasidim are burning masks in NY to protest restrictions Cuomo is imposing to try to bring their increase under control. Religious people have behaved badly through the pandemic -- well, fundamentalist religious people. I don't know how much that's about their particular beliefs and how much is due to their unwillingness to relinquish gathering in large groups.

I'm at the Maryland letter-writing zoom -- this will be their last one, because they're switching entirely to phone and text banking. I may never see these folks again!

Interesting that McConnell is putting some space between Trump and himself -- physically and metaphorically, it seems: Julie Tsirkin @JulieNBCNews MCCONNELL: "I haven't actually been to the White House since August the 6th. Because my impression was that their approach to how to handle this is different from mine and what I suggested that we do in the Senate, which is to wear a mask and practice social distancing."

The covid numbers in NJ were markedly worse today. Most of the new cases are in Monmouth and Ocean counties, but several other counties experienced increases, too, and county boundaries are not exactly non-porous.

Vote Forward hit 12 million letters today. I walked over to the main post office this afternoon to learn where I need to take my roughly 2000 letters on October 17. I met a postal worker who explained the procedure to me, and showed me the bin on the loading dock where I can drop all the letters. He said they would be taken to a sorting facility in Kearney, and that there are pickups a few times a day -- oh, and that I should come after 11, by which time the delivery trucks will be gone and there will be room for my car.

[The COVID Tracking Project @COVID19Tracking](#) Our daily update is published. States reported 1 million tests, 55k cases, and 975 deaths. 34k people are currently hospitalized with COVID-19. WI, ND, UT and WY reported record high case counts today.

Cases and hospitalizations are both increasing. Wisconsin is setting up field hospitals. And fall has barely started.

The news today is flat-out nuts, with Trump's doctor clearing him to go back out on the road, the GOP focused on getting their SCOTUS nominee approved, the right trying to blame the Whitmer kidnapping attempt on the left while Trump continues to attack her, the CDC trying to do contact tracing on the WH hot spot, violent demonstrations in Hasidic neighborhoods in NYC -- SARS-Cov-2 is the catalyst that is accelerating and exacerbating all our conflicts.

Friday, October 9

[Nell Greenfieldboyce @nell\\_sci\\_NPR](#) The new Nobel laureate in physics, Andrea Ghez, indirectly inspired an important test in science writing, the “Finkbeiner Test,” created to help reporters avoid gender bias. To pass this test, an article about a female scientist cannot mention that she is a woman, her husband’s job, her childcare arrangements, how she nurtures underlings, how she was taken aback by the competitiveness of her field, how she is a role model for other women, how she is the “first woman to...” The test was created by journalist Christie Aschwanden [@cragcrest](#) and inspired by an essay by my friend and mentor Ann Finkbeiner [@AnnFinkbeiner](#) which was about her effort to profile an astronomer—who happened to be Andrea Ghez—as an astronomer, and not as a female astronomer. <https://lastwordonnothing.com/2013/01/17/5266/>.... “I’m going to be blindly, aggressively, egregiously ignorant of her gender,” Finkbeiner wrote back then. The resulting profile of Ghez is lovely: <https://nature.com/news/astronomy-star-tracker-1.12622> But, you ask, isn’t someone’s gender relevant, especially in physics where only 4 women have won out of 216 people awarded the Nobel Prize? As Ann Finkbeiner has pointed out, being the 1st or 1 of few women “says a lot more about the prize-giving committee than it does about her.” Women are amazingly under-represented in the Nobels, and so far not a single black scientist has ever won a Nobel.

Two tai chi classes, then off to get my flu shot. I made sure it was at least two weeks after my last injection in the vaccine trial.

The texting event this evening was a bit frustrating. There was a celebrity on (Alyssa Milano) and much time was wasted in chatting. But I think they only wanted us to send 100 texts each anyway, and we did it. Here's what I forgot: bring a pile of letters to work on while I wait for things to get sorted out. It would be more efficient just to go through slack, I guess, but that's a bit overwhelming. Anyway, I did remember the letters eventually, which helped me manage my impatience.

Saturday, October 10

The flu shot was a clear reminder that I always have some reaction after a vaccination, even if it's so mild that the only thing I can't do is sleep on my left arm. So I'm pretty sure I'm in the control group in the vaccine trial, and I won't be much use because I'm going to try my hardest not to get infected with SARS-CoV-2.

I'm registering voters from 2-4 today at an event organized by Leslie L., in front of The Cottage on Monticello Avenue, a new spot for me. I was looking for a text banking event to do afterwards, but then I remembered that I have to cook this evening, so that settles that. I did 6 events this week, between the phone banking, text banking, and this voter registration, so that's ok. I'm scheduled for 5 next week, and I might find events to add on Wednesday and Thursday. Or not -- given that I have commitments on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings, I might just have to do letters on those days and step up my weekend texting.

It was interesting to hang out in front of The Cottage for a couple of hours and watch the neighborhood people walk by. It was the cafe's opening day, so we helped make it a festive occasion. I don't think we registered more than a handful of people all day, but at least we helped some people figure out how voting works this year. I bought a nice little quiche, too.

Still, when I got home, I didn't feel as though I had done enough work on the election, so I signed up to text bank in Pennsylvania this evening.

NYT: [In major blow to Trump, federal judge throws out attempt to block drop boxes in Pennsylvania, citing no evidence of fraud.](#)

All the covid news has been dismal. Cases are rising all over the US and in many other countries as well. Several Western European countries and the UK are exceeding their earlier peaks.

All the same, Trump tried to hold a campaign rally at the WH today. He invited 2000 people, I think, and four or five hundred showed up.

The tutorial and setup for the Pennsylvania text banking was slow, but that's normal. They have quite an operation -- excellent filmed tutorial, heavy use of Slack. They gave me 300 names, which I thought would be

too many -- but I guess I was basing that on those super-responsive Democrats in Ohio. For this group, it seems fine. I won't ask for more since they shut down for the night in 45 minutes.

Anyway, I like my flexibility here -- I can now text for Ohio and Pennsylvania, two important states.

Sunday, October 11

Qigong class in the morning, texting for Ohio in the afternoon.

Nicholas Christakis is describing the "swiss cheese" model of pandemic response on twitter. *In order to stop the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and substantially reduce the risk of the COVID-19 epidemic in a family, firm, or nation, one just needs enough layers of Swiss cheese (in the [#SwissCheeseModel](#)), but not necessarily \*all\* of them. This also explains how and why different countries have succeeded -- using different combinations of approaches. In Korea, they relied on masking and testing; in New Zealand, on border closures and contact tracing; in Greece, on gathering bans and school closures. To be clear, the foregoing countries did more than just those things mentioned. And most countries did various combinations of things. And the timing of implementation is also crucial. ... The recent failure to control COVID-19 in the White House super-spreading event may relate to an over-reliance on testing, without \*also\* implementing physical distancing, masking, or additional interventions. ... This [#SwissCheeseModel](#) conceptualization was first introduced by James Reason to discuss failures in complex systems that require coordination of many human and mechanical elements in order to avoid catastrophe (such as in nuclear power and airplane accidents).*

I missed this when it appeared the other day:

[Steven Fulop @StevenFulop Oct 9](#) Some perspective. We went from averaging 5 cases per day in the prior weeks to averaging 10 cases per day last week. That number may not seem big relative to a city our size but don't be fooled by that as it grows exponentially/quickly

NYT: Many Covid-19 survivors are struggling with 'brain fog.'



Monday, October 12

The tree mapping group was going to meet at the pier this morning, but it's been too rainy -- Hurricane Delta, I think, is making its way up the east coast. I worked out briefly, but got a phone call from someone I met in the Hoboken women's AA meeting, and she asked me to be her sponsor. I was pleased to accept -- I'm chairing a meeting, I have a sponsee -- I'm doing all the things!

The Monday tai chi class was an interview with Ken Van Sickle, one of Cheng Man-Ch'ing's senior students in Chinatown in the seventies. I'm pausing to read a brief autobiography of Ken -- he was born in New Brunswick, NJ in 1932, so he's nearly 90. He was apparently quite an athletic young man -- gymnastics, wrestling, archery, saber fencing -- and he has never lost his physical fitness and good carriage. Anyway, he told us some good stories of his early days studying tai chi and gave some sound advice to people about their own practice.

I set up 20 envelopes for tomorrow, and I'll be text banking this evening. And what shall I do for the rest of the afternoon? Relax, perhaps.

The Senate hearing for Amy Coney Barrett is going on today, but I can not bear to watch any of it.

I'm on a zoom call with the NJ-08 for Progress with people who are letter-writing, phone banking, and text banking. I got 200 names to send texts to, and haven't heard a peep -- and neither has anybody else. We're thinking there's definitely something wrong with the Democrats' platform ThruText this evening. There's no way to know whether the holdup is in sending the messages or receiving the replies. I could work on some more letters, but I am very tired of letters and looking forward to taking them all to the post office this Saturday.

Tuesday, October 13

Some replied from last night's texts have come through, so I'm handling them this morning.

Listening to Brian Williams' show from last night: Early voting has started in many states and people are so eager to vote that they're waiting in line for up to ten hours due to voter suppression measures that limit the number of polling places and failing to maintain voting equipment (Georgia) and limiting the number of drop boxes in urban areas (Texas). Trump is back on the campaign trail, even though there's still some risk that he's infectious.

The word people keep using lately to criticize Trump is "reckless." Biden says it every time, and now I'm hearing other people say it as well. It seems like a good choice, and then I get to see people spell it "wreckless" all over the place, too, a kind of an eggcorn. Apparently that misspelling has been around for a long time, because Merriam Webster shows Theodore Dreiser using it in 1914.

NY Power Authority @NYPAenergy -- NYPA & PEAK Coalition unveiled an agreement today to transition NYPA's in-city natural gas plants to low to zero #CarbonEmission resources and technologies, including exploring #batterystorage.

The J&J vaccine trial has been paused due to the illness of one of the participants. We don't yet know more than that.

I just had my last letter-writing zoom before I mail my letters on Saturday morning. I told a few people I'd send them invitation to some texting sessions for Ohio, and I have done so.

I'm glad to say that I'll be doing some other things on Wednesday and Thursday this week. On Wednesday, Henry and I will pay a visit to the senior community for a sort of festival they're having. I think it'll be a perfect time to enjoy the fall colors in NJ. On Thursday, I'll go back to Denville to get a haircut, my second since covid started 7 months ago. I should have plenty of time to go to a park afterwards.

I started having so many political events on my calendar, that it became necessary to add another color to my Apple calendar -- how's that for a milestone?

Seen on twitter: The FBI says that the Whitmer plotters also discussed

kidnapping Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam. We note that Trump also urged his followers to "LIBERATE VIRGINIA!"

Wednesday, October 14

Reasons not to get cocky about the election (not that I've been doing that), NYT column by Thomas Edsall: Republicans have been registering more new voters than Democrats in quite a few states. Twice as many Biden voters are planning to vote by mail, which can be tricky for several reasons.

Henry and I went to the senior community today, and it was lovely to be walking outdoors on a clear autumn day. The areas we visited were not yet at peak color, but there were many beautiful trees.

It was nice to take a day off from my tasks. In an hour, I'll be chairing the Hoboken women's AA meeting for the second time.

I'm still ignoring the Amy Coney Barrett hearings as much as I can. She's not answering any questions, anyway. To be fair, few SCOTUS candidates do any more.

Coronavirus cases just keep rising, in the UK and in many European countries as well as in the US. In the US, the virus is out of control in the upper midwest -- ND, SD, Montana, Wisconsin, Utah -- and on the increase in 25 more states. The governor of South Dakota blames her crowded hospitals on an excess of testing, for god's sake. In Wisconsin, the Republican legislature and the courts continue to stymie every protective measure the Democratic governor tries to impose. The west coast, the southwest, most of the northeast are currently looking pretty good. NJ and NY are struggling with outbreaks, trying to rein them in. Murphy is using a lighter touch than Cuomo and DeBlasio, I think; I hope both governors are successful.

I still think about the fundamentalist religious communities who display so much opposition to social distancing measures. Maybe their rites and practices are so central to their identities and their communities than having to back down feels annihilating. The Hasidic groups certainly act as though that's how they experience it.

The AA meeting was smoother this time, and I volunteered to help out in some way at the Christmas Alkathon.

covidtracking.com: cases up, hospitalizations up, deaths no longer declining.

Thursday, October 15

I just learned a new word, jush. But I didn't really learn it, because I don't have a good sense of how to use it and it's clear I would sound stupid if I tried. urbandictionary.com says it's "a replacement for [any word](#). 'jush' is often used by [drag](#) queens, mostly [Jasmine Masters](#)."

I went back out to Denville today for my second haircut since February, which was a pleasure. Then I went to a nearby county park -- Tourne Park. There was one loop trail with a lot of up followed by a lot of down, and then I found a narrow flat trail that went along a marshy area. Both very nice, and it was great to be outdoors on another beautiful fall day. I think it's going to be rainy for the next few days, so I'm glad I didn't waste these. Maybe Wednesday and Thursday will be my weekend this month -- no scheduled daytime tai chi classes or texting sessions.

Covid-19 cases (averaging over 50,000 per day), hospitalizations still rising (over 37,000); deaths still flat (averaging over 700 a day, I'd say). I'm trying to read off the smoothed curves on the plots at covidtracking.com because the data has such a pronounced weekly pattern -- there's very little data reporting on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

A very large trial has just shown that remdesivir does not save lives. I don't think any mortality benefit was shown in earlier studies, either, but it was shown to speed recovery by a few days. In this new study, it doesn't even do that. Nor did the three other drugs studied.

There's some kind of story circulating about a laptop that allegedly belonged to Hunter Biden; I gave it no attention or credence, and now the FBI is investigating it as a possible Russian intelligence operation.

Trump was apparently warned that Giuliani may be a tool of Russian intelligence himself, a useful idiot, I suppose, and wasn't interested.

Friday, October 16

The clouds are hanging low this morning, so I'm especially glad I got to spend so much time outdoors the past two days. I greatly enjoyed my two-day vacation from politics. Today I'm back to work. I have to finish off my Vote Forward letters so they can be mailed out tomorrow -- and Vote Forward has passed 15 million letters, which is astonishing and wonderful. Then I'll be text banking for Ohio this evening.

Sam Pesin asked me for my email address on FB, and then used it to invite me the membership meeting of the Friends of Liberty State Park. Because of the aggressive interference of Paul Fireman, he doesn't want to publicize the meeting widely, and he's moved the meeting to an outdoor pavilion at the park. How interesting! So I'll dress warmly and go Sunday morning -- no, tomorrow! Maybe I'll load the letters in my car and deliver them afterwards.

The covid numbers are well above their first peak, when NY and NJ were in so much trouble, and they look to reach at least the second peak, when the southeast was hit so hard.

I'm listening to Maddow while I finish my letters. She's spending an awfully lot of time debunking the various lies Trump told in his town hall last night, which seems like a waste. But I did learn something -- I knew the government was opposing some aspect of the ACA in court, but I confess that I didn't know what it was: it turns out it's the provision requiring insurance companies to cover people with pre-existing conditions. I also learned that he's promoting a conspiracy theory that Democratic governors are only imposing social distancing restrictions as a political maneuver to hurt him, and that they'll lift them all on November 4th. Sigh. He stuck up for QAnon even more clearly than he had for white supremacists at the debate, praising them for their opposition to pedophilia. Double sigh. Apparently he really poured it on last night.

Trump has rejected emergency aid to California after their terrible year of

forest fires, which isn't even over yet.

I finally found out roughly how many people write letters with Vote Forward: "more than 145,095," according to email reminding us to mail our letters tomorrow.

And Trump has now approved emergency aid to Florida. I wonder if he just holds out until the governor calls and asks him nicely.

Jersey City and Kushner made a deal, and the development at Journal Square will proceed without a tax abatement.

[Larry Brilliant MD, MPH @larrybrilliant](#) Will good epidemiological investigation defeat disease spreading politics? The Minnesota Department of Health says it has so far traced 20 cases —two hospitalized—of Covid-19 back to a rally held by President Trump.

I was just on a call to do some texting in Ohio -- I seem to have signed up for two different regional groups in Ohio, and this one has larger texting teams. The leadership of the call is young and very sassy -- some of them seem to enjoy teasing Trumpers in a way that most text groups would discourage, I think. We were only given 100 names, and I haven't interacted with a lot of people. I signed up for two shifts tomorrow to make sure I'd get enough names to make it interesting.

Saturday, October 17

The Friends of Liberty State Park held their membership meeting outdoors at LSP this morning. It was about 50 degrees, and I wore my almost-warmest winter gear so I'd be ready to stand around outside for a while. It was sunny and beautiful, and I don't think I was ever cold. Sam Pesin stood on a picnic table to run the meeting, taking attendance and calling out everybody by name as he went. He gave us the latest updates from Trenton on efforts to get the LSP Protection Act passed and about the nefarious doings of Fireman, spreading his money around in his efforts to acquire Caven Point for his golf course. The park superintendent then talked about the DEP plan to remediate the polluted land in a large undeveloped section of the park. I was dismayed to learn that they'd have to remove all the trees as they dug down 10 or 14 feet to remove the

contaminated topsoil, after which they would cap it with clean soil and start planting. I almost cried to realize that such radical methods were necessary -- it'll be a long time before anyone can walk in the woods over there.

Then I picked up Henry in front of our building and he helped me take my letters to the loading dock of the post office -- nearly 2,000 of them, all neatly boxed. We stacked them on a pallet, and Bob's your uncle. I'll send some pictures to Gail, the organizer of the California letter-writing group, and post them on Twitter.

I'm doing some texting for Ohio this afternoon -- once again, it's only 100 names per shift, so I'm lamentably unproductive. But it did give me some time to talk with Sheree as the replies slowed down.

We've heard about two governors who were in danger of being kidnaped or killed, and now we learn that there was also a threat against the mayor of Wichita.

Here's an amazing headline from the NYT: [A Swiss canton explodes with virus cases after a yodeling event.](#)

Sunday, October 18.

I need to move around today! I haven't walked or exercised in a couple of days, except for a couple of tai chi classes.

I had two tai chi classes today, and enjoyed both of them. I did manage to take a walk, over to Van Vorst Park because it was too windy to walk along the river.

I talked with Steve on the phone for an hour and a half about Terry's reactions to a recent redesign of the taichichuan.org web site. Her comments were detailed and helpful. We agreed with nearly all of them and added a few of our own.

I'll be texting for Pennsylvania in another hour.

From James Solomon's (my city councilperson) most recent email: Jersey City's COVID-19 case trend should concern us. Over the prior three weeks, cases have tripled from roughly five cases per day to over 15 per day. To put these numbers in context, we are currently averaging 6-7 cases per 100K residents. According to Harvard's Global Health Institute, that caseload places us in their "Community Spread" risk level. Alarmingly, if we reach 10 cases per 100K each day, we would enter their "Accelerated Spread" risk level, in which they recommend tougher measures to slow the virus's spread.

This is a good line: Michael Osterholm, a renowned infectious-disease expert, said on Meet the Press that a "herd immunity" theory reportedly invoked by Dr. Scott Atlas "is the most amazing combination of pixie dust and pseudoscience I've ever seen."

The feds are making plans with local pharmacies to handle distribution of the first vaccines to be approved, with an eye toward vaccinating nursing home personnel first. (At least that's what I think I just heard on the news.) That could turn out to be a mistake if the vaccine suppresses symptoms but leaves people just as infectious as ever. That would be a bad scenario.

Sent 300 texts; got a few responses. I'm still impressed with the Pennsylvania operation and signed up for two shifts next weekend. I'm not sure I gave correct information to a Pennsylvania voter whose ballot hasn't arrived. If I can still see the conversation tomorrow, I'll ask in Slack.

Some people think that the Sturgis motorcycle rally may be responsible for the high case numbers in the upper midwest.

Monday, October 19

I've been continuing to chat with a couple of Pennsylvania voters from last night, I did some work on the taichichuan.org web site, and I finally worked out for a while. Time for a shower before lunch.

I took a nap after lunch. That's two naps in one week, very unusual for me. I think I'm holding the stress at arm's length, but maybe it's working on me anyway.



Now I'm texting in Ohio with the Jersey City group NJ-08 for Progress. After an hour and a half, responses have slowed to a trickle. I hope this is useful to some voters and to the Ohio Democrats. A lot of people on tonight's lists, and Saturday's too, have voted already.

covidtracking.com's numbers are always a low on Mondays, but new cases are clearly still increasing, and so are hospitalizations. Deaths are flat, or decreasing slightly, but they're bound to start increasing again because hospitalizations have been climbing since September 20th.

Tuesday, October 20

Even though I took a nap, I still went to bed early and slept reasonably long. Maybe it's the change of season, maybe it's the stress of the election period, watching covid cases rise again.

There's going to be a challenge trial of a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine at the Imperial College London. Many medical ethicists think this is unethical, because we don't yet know enough about how to treat covid, nor about its long-term damage.

CBS: All 62 residents at Kansas nursing home have covid, 10 have died.

I haven't even been commenting on this herd immunity fantasy being spread by POTUS and his favorite advisors because it's so patently stupid, and that story is one reason why that's so.

Murphy says that contact tracing shows that the rise in cases in NJ is due to family gatherings and small parties.

I just had an appointment with my Vanguard advisor. There didn't seem to be much to say about the money, so we had a more personal conversation than usual, talking about how we're coping with the pandemic. I think I'll skip my noon qigong class so I can listen to the new Bugle podcast!

My favorite letter-writing group met today to celebrate getting our letters in the mail last weekend. It was fun to see everybody's pictures of their

stacks of letters and their trips to the post office. Gail reported that two local Swing Left groups had delivered about 60K and 100K letters, respectively -- one group had to hire a U-Haul trailer to take their letters to their local sorting facility!

By then, the skies had cleared and it looked pretty inviting outside, so I went out for a walk. I found that I was feeling so --- I don't know what, frantic, maybe? -- that it was hard to choose something to listen to. I decided on a couple of dharma talks, hoping they'd settle me down, and they were helpful. After a while, my new sponsee, Sue, called to check in, and I was in a pretty good state for a conversation.

At 6, I attended a presentation about the planned development of a few hundred currently inaccessible, polluted acres at Liberty State Park. It was polluted because of the railways, not factories. When the railroad companies wanted to turn marshland into usable solid land, they filled it with industrial rubble, coal clinkers, and whatever else they could get their hands on, and the result is a fairly potent stew. The plan is to turn much of it back to wetlands, which seems like a very good idea, both as wildlife habitat and as protection against flooding.

In a few more minutes, I have to dress and set up the living room for teaching tai chi. I'm looking at the new data from Covid Tracking: hospitalizations still rising, deaths perhaps beginning to rise now. The upper midwest still looks pretty dreadful. North Dakota is setting world records in terms of cases per 100,000 residents. Over 30 states fall in the category the NYT calls "higher and staying high." The west coast and the northeast look the best, but there are warm to hot spots everywhere.

That was a nice class. We worked the hell out of the rollback, which I always want to do and there's never enough time for!

Wednesday, October 21

It's been a busy day in a busy week, but now I can sit for a few minutes before dinner. I had my third appointment at Mt. Sinai today for the vaccine trial. They took my blood, which I imagine will be checked for antibodies, and which I imagine won't show much. It was pretty quick, so I had time for

a long, rambling walk in Central Park, and in regions of the park I haven't seen before -- the North Woods and its neighbors.

I got home at about 3, and soon logged in to zoom for my 4:00 Tai Chi school board meeting. I have only one task remaining today, and that's to chair an AA meeting at 7:30. Whew. It's nice to be loafing.

Governor Murphy is now quarantining after two of his staff members have tested positive.

The Covid Tracking update is here. Hospitalizations keep climbing; it looks as though deaths have truly started to climb.

North Dakota is so swamped by the virus that they're giving up on contact tracing. Some states seem to be doing less testing because they don't like their rising case numbers, but that won't help their hospitals. Or their morgues.

Case numbers in NJ are climbing relentlessly, including in Hudson County.

The AA meeting was lovely.

Thursday, October 22

Finally, a quiet day! I have nothing scheduled until tai chi class this evening. I may do some texting with Open Progress this afternoon if they have something open.

I looked on Act Blue to see how much I've donated to political candidates, and it was about \$8K. The number will be higher by election day. That's a lot of money, but given that I'm not spending any money on travel or eating out or whatever I normally spend money on, it doesn't seem to be hurting. I'm lucky to have the resources to do this.

I've had a quiet day. I worked out while I watched some of last night's TV. I made muffins after lunch. And then I sat on the couch and listened to a few podcasts.

The Covid Tracking data is dreadful today -- cases, hospitalizations, deaths all climbing. The number of deaths is definitely climbing now. The number on the smoothed curve is about 750; today's spike is closer to 1200. I just realized that this project has a blog, and they release, among other things, a weekly report, which smooths out the weekly trends.

The drug tocilizumab, used to calm an overactive immune system, was just shown in a clinical trial to be useless. The FDA just gave its approval to remdesivir despite studies that have failed to show much impact. I believe I've heard on TWiV that it is almost surely given too late, after the viral replication phase of the disease has waned, because it can only be delivered intravenously. As a result, these recent studies may not provide conclusive results.

In NJ, 5% of SARS-CoV-2 test results are positive. That's a bad number, but it's nothing compared to North Dakota, where it's 35%.

Friday, October 23

Convalescent plasma isn't really working for people, either, and it may be for the same reason that remdesivir isn't. Both would have to be given early, but people don't reach the hospital until they're in later stages of the virus.

I'm in an unaccountably good mood. I must be dissociating, because the election is terrifying and the virus is out of control. I can't figure it out, but I'll enjoy it. Maybe it's because I spontaneously decided to skip a class -- it always makes me happy to cancel something!

I'm skipping my 1:00 class, too, because I have an appointment to map trees at 2:00. At least two of us are meeting at Grundy Pier to map trees in the Exchange Place neighborhood. Later, I'll be text banking at 5.

But now, I should just have time to write up the minutes from Wednesday's board meeting.

[Vanita Gupta @vanitaguptaCR](#) JUST NOW: [@SenSchumer](#) forced the Senate into a closed session over the Barrett nomination, saying "Before

we go any further, we should shut off the cameras, close the Senate, and talk face to face about what this might mean for the country.”

From Vote Forward:

- Total letters written: 17,484,276
- Total volunteers writing letters: 182,331
- Value of stamps purchased, supporting USPS: \$9.6 million
- Percent of prepared letters confirmed sent so far: 93%

Tree mapping was so good! Dan and I finished the block of red maples along the light rail track that I started a while ago, then mapped a block of Sussex between Hudson and the river. There were three different tree types there -- more red maples, two possible Kentucky Coffee Trees, and a cherry tree of some sort. One of the maples is unlike the others, too -- the limbs are more spread out, and it has bigger leaves. It's fun to observe the trees so closely -- I've walked these blocks many times and not seen what we saw today. Another person joined us for a while to learn how to do it -- he works for the special improvement district and this fits in with other work he's doing.

Now I'm about ready to start texting for Ohio for a few hours. I'll be texting today, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. It looks as though I'm already signed up to text for the three days preceding the election; I could still add more shifts. I'm going to be glad to be busy, I think.

I'm getting almost no responses, and Ohio only lets you have 100 names. I'm kind of sorry I'm texting for them so much. Let's see, 2 shifts tomorrow, but Pennsylvania after that. If I have extra time, I'll see what Open Progress is up to. And yes, they're using mobilize, and I signed up to text with them on Friday afternoon and evening next week.

We have finally heard the plan for our gym. They're allowing up to ten people during a 90-minute slot, and that seems high to me. I might be inclined to leave if there are more than 5 people, especially if they're noisy or sweaty.

Holy shit, over 80K new cases reported today by Covid Tracking -- they note that two states were reporting backlogs. Hospitalizations still going

up. Deaths dropped back a bit.

And a bit of good news: AstraZeneca and J&J are restarting their vaccine trials.

Saturday, October 24

I enjoyed the Saturday morning women's AA meeting, and I'm starting to feel more connected there as well. Soon I'll attend a tai chi class which will introduce the new "tuning," the qigong associated with autumn. I'm skipping the second class which will go more deeply into it -- I bet I can watch a tape of it later. I'll start texting for Ohio at one, and do two shifts. Based on yesterday's experience, I'll have plenty of time to cook my beans.

Washington Post: Well into Europe's second wave of the coronavirus, so many Belgians are sick or quarantining that there aren't enough police on the streets, teachers in classrooms or medical staff in hospitals.

The texting has been better today -- I got 300 names in each of two shifts, and quite a few replies. And I'm out. I texted from 1:00 until 4:30, and managed to make a bean stew in the lull between shifts. A good afternoon's work.

It's a Saturday, but the number of new covid cases is nearly equal to yesterday's -- over 80K. Hospitalizations still going up -- almost 42K.

I'm reading that one of Mike Pence's closest advisers tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 earlier this week. Trump keeps holding his virus spreading rallies all over the place.

Sunday, October 25

Now four or five people on Pence's staff, including his chief of staff, have tested positive, says twitter. And have they been going on his campaign tours with him?

Wisconsin set up a field hospital last week, Texas is setting up a temporary hospital in a convention center.

I've had a quiet day. Our regular Fresh Direct Sunday delivery arrived. I started the new home qigong practice. Henry and I took a walk after lunch. He fell down when we tried to go two abreast between the bollards along the Hudson walkway, but got up pretty quickly and seemed uninjured. These falls of his are very worrying. I seem to have learned not to try to grab him on the way down, which is good, since that's how I broke my arm a couple of years ago.

Now I'm texting Pennsylvania, and the response rate is very low. I think Pennsylvanians are very tired of being phoned and texted. I started with 300, added a second 300, and now it seems I have time to ask for yet another batch. Yes, and that's 900. Still very few responses.

The virus transmission rate in NJ is estimated to be 1.19. The last recorded daily positivity rate, apparently, was on October 18th, when it was "5.28%, and at 6.15% in the north," or so says the

The Salt Lake Tribune: Utah's hospitals prepare to ration care as a record number of coronavirus patients flood their ICUs. The lede says "in a week or two." "Under the criteria, which would require [Governor] Herbert's approval, patients who are getting worse despite receiving intensive care would be moved out first. In the event that two patients' conditions are equal, the young get priority over the old, since older patients are more likely to die." If nothing else, that's a hell of a way to put pressure on the governor to get them help.

Nate Silver just tweeted that Biden and Trump are tied in Texas polls, according to their weighted formula. Maybe all those Vote Forward letters will make a difference!

Monday, October 26

I woke up early and listened to a dharma talk in bed. Gil Fronsdal was talking about his Zen teacher Mel Weitsman, relating key memories and observations about time they spent together. He described Weitsman, the head of the San Francisco Zen Center for many years, as someone completely unpretentious, always showing up fully for whatever presented

itself to him.

There are 8 days to go until the election. The virus is out of control and Mark Meadows, Trump's chief of staff, said yesterday that they wouldn't control it. Why? Because it's a highly infectious virus. Well, yes, we knew that.

It looks as though it's going to be gray and rainy all day, so I'm glad we got outside yesterday.

cleveland.com: A Miami County resident has told police that he was approached about helping to arrest Gov. Mike DeWine at his Greene County home and try him for "tyranny."

It's a depressing day, knowing that Amy Cony Barrett is going to be on SCOTUS within hours.

I attended the first 30 minutes of the 1:00 tai chi class, and enjoyed it. But when I noticed I was becoming sleepy, I pointed the laptop away from the bed and went to sleep.

I sent 300 texts to voters in Ohio, but got few responses, as did most other people in the NJ-08 zoom session. We think voters are pretty tired of all these texts. It may also be true, though, that they're reaching out to unlikely voters and independents by now, having reached nearly all the Democrats.

Tuesday, October 27

7 days until the election, so 6 more days to text. Yesterday was grim, with a new extreme right-wing member on the Supreme Court. It was hard to go to sleep. I was full of rage (murderous rage, even), humiliation, contempt for the American voters who allowed this to happen. It took a lot of self-talk and several dharma talks to calm myself down, and I don't feel a whole lot better this morning. I have to keep reminding myself of all the other parts of my life -- tai chi, AA meetings, exercise. Maybe I'll learn something new, I told myself last night, like a language or a musical instrument.



I got email from Satis about their Thanksgiving offering, and there's a take-out option. I signed up right away. Jim T. called last night, feeling pretty forlorn about Thanksgiving, especially because his youngest son had just accepted an invitation from his girlfriend's family. We agreed that we would have a zoom session that day, at the very least. The next nice day after the election, I should go down and take a walk with him.

I went to my qigong class at noon, and now I'm idle until I start texting at 4, so I'm doing some laundry. I ought to do some tai chi, too, to warm up for teaching this evening.

The Senate, having done the only task the GOP takes seriously, is now adjourning without passing another economic relief bill.

Unfortunately, my texting commitment was cancelled and it was really too late to make a new one for today. Fortunately, it had cleared up so I could take a walk instead.

After dinner, Henry and I attended the annual meeting of our condo association (over zoom, bien sur), and then I taught a tai chi class with Angie.

I'm pleased to notice how much better I feel than I did last night and this morning. It's a wondrous thing that I don't get stuck in feelings of rage, grief, and despair the way I did in my teens and twenties. That's a long time ago, of course, but I'm still grateful for it.

Wednesday, October 28

Covid Tracking: There are 42,917 people currently hospitalized in the US with covid-19.

NYT: U.S. Reports a Record 500,000-Plus Coronavirus Cases Over the Past Week. The average positive test rate is now 7.3%.

There have been more than 43.9 million cases worldwide and more than 1.1 million deaths; there were 452,310 new cases reported yesterday -- and an increase of 36% in a single week. We're clearly not the only

country with an out of control epidemic. If I play with a table of cases by country on the NYT site, we're in the lead with most cases, but when I sort by cases per 100K, we're only 14th, behind smaller countries in Europe, the Middle East, and South America.

Ras Baraka, the mayor of Newark, is imposing strict limitations on parks and businesses to blunt a sharp increase of cases there.

NYT: Some survivors of [Covid-19](#) carry worrying signs that their immune system has turned on the body, reminiscent of potentially debilitating diseases like lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, a new study has found. / At some point, the body's defense system in these patients shifted into attacking itself, rather than the virus, the study suggests. The patients are producing molecules called "autoantibodies" that target genetic material from human cells, instead of from the virus. / This misguided immune response may exacerbate severe Covid-19. It may also explain why so-called "long haulers" have lingering problems months after their initial illness has resolved and the virus is gone from their bodies. / The findings carry important implications for treatment: Using existing tests that can detect autoantibodies, doctors could identify patients who might benefit from treatments used for lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. There is no cure for these diseases, but some treatments decrease the frequency and severity of flare-ups.

I started listening to an episode of This American Life about the penalty the Democrats seem to have paid in Florida by refraining from canvassing and rallies while the Republicans continued on as if nothing was happening. It was too upsetting to listen to, though.

Since I missed my texting session yesterday, I'll try to do some today. I signed up with Ohio and I'm waiting for email that explains where to log in. That one turned out to rely on a new app and seemed to involve the phone, so I ducked out. I made some attempts to start texting, but nothing seemed to work out, so it was another useless day.

I gave some money to somebody, and I hardly even remember who -- oh, I know -- it was some Run for Something candidates.

Sword class was good, and now I'm just hanging out until my AA meeting this evening.

Thursday, October 29

It's raining all day, as the remnants of hurricane Zeta travel northeast after making landfall in Louisiana.

I signed up to do some texting this afternoon, but the Open Progress folks seem to be unable to meet the demand, and the texts keep drying up. Henry joked that they need to find people willing to receive the texts, and that's God's truth.

So it's been a pretty useless day over here. I had a bit of a workout in the living room while Henry went to the gym, and that's about it.

Natural experiments in Kansas and Tennessee have shown conclusively that mask mandates reduce cases and hospitalizations, which anyone who believes public health experts has already known for months.

It's not just US states struggling with overloaded hospitals -- many European countries are in the same situation, even countries that escaped the first wave.

Covid Tracking's daily update is out. New cases still rising sharply -- 88,452. Hospitalizations still rising -- 46,095.

New Jersey's positivity rate is nearly 7%.

I don't have much to say about the election because I'm avoiding the breathless news. Voter suppression; rallies, both safe and unsafe; this poll, that poll, the other poll.

Friday, October 30

There's a new wave of cyberattacks, with ransomware shutting down US hospital networks. Some cybersecurity experts are saying that it's the worst attack in US history -- and they're targeting hospitals. Rachel

Maddow says the attackers are Russians, but I don't know if that's been established. She's talking about an bot system, TrickBot, that was blocked by Microsoft two or three weeks ago, along with US officials -- but apparently it wasn't blocked after all.

Furthermore, there was a hack of a Georgia county election system and the hackers are now releasing private voter data.

I went to the online sword practice at noon, and then skipped the 1:00 tai chi class.

I finally have texts to send for Open Progress! A non-partisan campaign for vote.org. That turned out to be a pain in the neck, because I was required to encourage MAGA people to vote. After I finished my 800, I switched to Pennsylvania. They opened up names at 5:00, and I was able to send out 900 texts, engage in lots of conversations, and even give useful information to a few people.

Holy cow, nearly 100K new cases today.

Saturday, October 31

I'm preparing for an afternoon and evening of texting for Pennsylvania. After breakfast, I vacuumed a bit, and I set up my next geezer boxes of supplements and meds, then attended the 10:00 Barrow St women's AA meeting. I also responded to people who had texted me after I stopped responding last night.

[Carl Quintanilla @carlquintanilla](#) New [@Stanford](#) study estimates that 18 Trump rallies have led to 30,000 COVID cases and 700 deaths

The Biden tour bus was just surrounded by trucks full of armed men in Texas and forced to halt in its tracks. One car was driven off the road. There were police present, but they declined to help. This election could not be more urgent.

I sent 400 texts to Ohio voters after checking on 538.com and seeing that Pennsylvania looks more secure for Democrats while Ohio is leaning red.

Took a nice long walk over to Liberty State Park, then came home to relax before dinner. Now texting Pennsylvania. They started me with 300 texts, and I'm most of the way through the first send. And that's it - they're all out for today. I was just texting Polly about some of the interesting conversations I had today: A naturalized citizen voting for the first time, a struggling single mother who let me pitch some Biden platform items to her, a guy who will probably vote for Biden but doesn't trust either party not to abuse power.

With the last guy in particular, I went way off script because it was interesting to talk with him.

Sunday, November 1

I'm in a kind of trance today, and have barely done anything -- I just wanted to be texting but I didn't have an assignment until 3:00. Now I'm finally logged into that, sent out the 200 messages they gave me, and now everybody's quiet already, in only 30 minutes. Bummer.

I did reconfirm with my speaker for the Wednesday night women's AA meeting, so that's good. I skipped my sword class, which was doubtless a mistake. My sponsee called, and I felt like I finally had something specific to offer, and something in line with the AA program -- I suggested that she write down some strategies she could use the next time she was feeling fearful or anxious, so she could refer to those notes when she noticed that she was in that state. Hmm. I wonder if I have strategies for this particular state!

Texting has become increasingly popular. This Ohio group is flooded today -- at least 150 new texters in this session. My list is still quiet. If the Ohio voters are as irritated by these texts now as I am by the Swing Left recruiters trying to get me to phone bank, then I'm surprised more of them don't yell at me.

I had some time before dinner, so I roasted some vegetables. It was good to be moving around, even a little! Now I'm texting for PA -- 300 messages to start, and now a second batch of 300.

This is something I thought about a lot in the beginning, but I had forgotten that it's almost surely still true: [Dr. Tom Frieden @DrTomFrieden](#) It's important to understand the magnitude of Covid spread in the US. Not everyone who is infected with Covid gets tested, so reported case numbers don't tell the full story. For every positive test reported, there are about four more infectious people who haven't been tested.

So that's maybe 200K people every day? More than a million people a week? Wow.

Monday, November 2

I didn't sign up for a shift, but the Pennsylvania setup is so wonderful that you can request texts even without a signup! So I just got 300 and I'm ready to go ... and another 300. Apparently they're restricting people to one batch now, so I got lucky. I can sign out soon with a clean conscience -- and I've been able to provide useful information to at least 4 people, I think, which makes to make up for the conversation last night in which I was obnoxious and pushy.

European CDC reports 46.6 million covid cases globally, 1.2 million deaths.

In Washington, DC and NYC, building are being boarded up out of fears of election violence. I don't think we've ever seen that.

The Supreme Court ruled 7-1 that Deray McKesson couldn't be held responsible for the actions of a random protestor at a demonstration in Baton Rouge where he was a leader. Whew.

I took a walk this afternoon, and it felt wonderful to be in motion. Now I'm texting Ohio -- just one batch of 200, probably.

Tuesday, November 3

And here it is, Election Day. Cities boarded up, National Guard in some places.

Feeling at loose ends, I made some calls to friends, and got to chat with Tom G for a while.

And now it's texting time -- I have two assignments, 200 names each. I think that was a mistake, but I'll take it. They have a greater need for phone bankers, and I feel a bit guilty about sticking with texting, but that's what I'm doing.

I logged in to the NJ-08 zoom at 3, and there was no new assignment for me -- that clarified why I got two at noon. So I took a break and went for a walk along the river.

Polly told me that the national campaign was looking for volunteers to handle incomplete conversations, so I grabbed some of those, talking to people in a variety of states. Their interface is more complex -- and more automated -- than Pennsylvania's, but I seem to be finding my way. And very busy -- there are more than 52K people on this slack. I've handled a few batches so far -- 30, 4, 30, 30. There's not a lot of time left.

I've hopped on to a couple of zooms, once with the Swing Left group in Oakland I wrote letters with so often, and a couple of times with NJ-08 for Progress, the local group -- which includes, at various times, a couple of city council people and a couple of people who challenged machine democrats in local races and lost.

Wednesday, November 4

I was pretty exhausted by yesterday afternoon, so I went to bed once it became clear that the election results wouldn't be known last night. Watching them trickle in was a grim process. I have to think that Americans, white Americans anyway, are so ignorant they barely know what they're voting for, they just know they're sticking with their tribe. I've read that when Trump voters are told facts about the Republican agenda, like the fact that they're trying in court to rescind the portion of the ACA that requires coverage for pre-existing conditions, they don't believe them. They believe what they imagine, or what they've heard Trump say -- though it should be clear to anyone with eyes that he says what's convenient. And that's the charitable interpretation.

It was the highest voter turnout since 1900, I just read on twitter, but that doesn't seem to be helping.

Seven states have not yet reported. Trump, of course, has declared victory.

It wasn't easy to sleep with my entire body stiff with fear, but dharma talks helped once again.

There are bits of good news among the bad. The Democrats will retain the House, losing only 4 seats so far. I don't know that we worried about that, actually. It looks as though Kim, Malinowski, and Sherrill all kept their seats. NJ voted to legalize marijuana.

The head of the USPS will be in court today to justify his failure to get mail-in ballots delivered.

Polling seems to be broken.

In the meantime, 50K people are hospitalized with covid-19, and the numbers are still increasing sharply. In the two previous peaks, nearly 60K people were hospitalized each time. On average, there are more than 80K cases detected each day.

Henry and I went for a leisurely walk in Liberty State Park at noon, and I took a short nap when we got home. My eye is still twitching. Suddenly there's a wave of organizing going on to line up people to make calls aimed at helping people cure their ballots -- it's an odd expression, but I like it. I signed up for an event for North Carolina on Friday at 6.

The meeting tonight was lovely. I asked Val to speak, Val who was one of the hosts of the West coast letter-writing zoom sessions, and she was great, very personal and honest. She suggested as a topic "how does AA help you build resilience?" and it evoked some really good comments.

Covid Tracking: A record number of new cases, over 103K; hospitalizations over 52K and rising; the deaths number is tricky because Georgia has



reclassified some prior deaths, leading to a big spike.

Thursday, November 5

It's nighttime already. Usually I start writing here much sooner than this, but this is a weird goddamn week, waiting for the votes to be counted and hoping civil war doesn't break out.

I have started dealing with some of the things I postponed while I did political work the past few weeks and months. I had an appointment with Cara Jacobs to talk about a new medication for rosacea. I made an appointment for Monday with a physical medicine and rehab doctor -- at least I hope I did, because his profile emphasizes pain management, which isn't really my problem. I just feel as though something is out of whack near my right shoulder blade, and my chiropractor hasn't been able to fix it. I'll take my car to VW in Summit tomorrow to get it tuned up for winter.

I took a walk this afternoon -- it's another gorgeous day, with temperatures in the mid 60s. And now I just finished attending a tai chi class. I wasn't especially present, because my ankles hurt and I'm half crazy, but it was good to be there.

Covid Tracking: another bad day. New cases continue to shoot up -- more than 116K cases, another new national record, more than three times more than the first wave in May, almost double the peak of the second wave in the summer. The death curve is definitely rising now, though thankfully it's much lower than the first peak and hasn't yet reached the summer peak, either.

People on twitter are talking about Donald Trump's press conference this evening, which apparently was a waterfall of lies about voter fraud. The major networks cut way once he got going. Other Republicans aren't backing him up, apparently, which makes him even angrier. The VBM ballots are being counted after the in-person votes, and those are more likely to be Democratic, as we knew would happen for weeks before election day.

Friday, November 6

And it's evening again. I took my car in and spent the time walking around the beautiful streets of Summit, enjoying the leaves and checking out the political signs in front of the houses. In that neighborhood, behind the car dealership, Biden was way ahead of Trump; there were more Kean signs than Trump signs, but I think Malinowski was still in the lead.

This evening, I signed onto an event sponsored by the NC Dems to help cure provisional ballots. Even though they lost the presidential race, there are two close state races they're concerned about, a state Supreme Court justice and a DA. The presentation about how provisional ballots arise and what is done about them was really interesting and complex. It can happen that a person is voting in the wrong precinct but in the right county, so some of their votes count but not others. I made my phone calls, but mostly went straight to voicemail.

The Covid Tracking numbers are out and they continue to be dreadful -- rising tests, that's good; rapidly rising cases (over 125K) and hospitalizations (nearly 55K), not good; deaths are rising, too, but not as sharply. Still, the average daily death count is approaching 1,000, and it will surely pass that. That's a lot of dying.

The midwest is leading in hospitalizations, but every region shows increases. Same for deaths.

Saturday, November 7

Mark Meadows, Trump's chief of staff, just tested positive for the coronavirus. A Bloomberg news reporter says that at least four other WH aides have also tested positive.

Sometime yesterday: [Len Necefer, Ph.D. @lennecer](#) You want to know how much the Navajo Nation dislikes trump?

1. of the 85,000 registered voters on Navajo 76,000 voted. 89% turn out
2. Of those 76,000 voters 74,000 voted for Biden & 2,000 for Trump
3. Biden's current lead in Arizona sits at about 40,000

Whew. Pennsylvania was just called in Biden's favor -- all the major media

outlets seem to agree, including Fox. I still can't absorb it. I need a good cry. Trump is still kicking and screaming about fraud and banging on about his lawyers, but Pennsylvania has been entirely meticulous and judges have not been amused by the arguments of Trump's legal team.

At the 10am AA meeting, I offered to take over the zoom hosting from Erin, who moved to California a few months ago.

I went down to New Brunswick to sit in a community garden with Jim T. and have a conversation. It was really lovely -- a perfect day, a friendly setting.

Covid Tracking is as dismaying as ever. The number of cases is reaching new records every day, and the number of hospitalizations has been growing every day late September.

There have been celebrations in the streets all day, in New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia. Trump's followers don't believe it, and many of them may never believe it.

Sunday, November 8th

Listening to Daniel Griffin on TWiV. He says some people are refusing to be tested because they don't want their movements to be limited; I'm not sure where that's happening, but it's credible. In NY, he hears of people declining hospitalization because they don't want to be isolated.

Not much in the mood for anything today! I did manage to get myself to take a walk, thinking that we only have a few more days of this unseasonably warm and sunny weather. I'm still skipping tai chi classes.

I signed up with Fair Fight to do some texting in Georgia.

Someone else from the Saturday meeting called me -- these women are good at making phone calls. It was nice to be getting to know someone new. I'll have to return some calls, too, and not just sit back and receive them.

Monday, November 9th

I'm going to see a doctor at 11:30 -- I'm looking for a physical medicine and rehab doctor, but I might have a pain management doctor instead. We'll see how it goes. Anyway, it stimulated me to do some stretching and exercise this morning, and I started doing tai chi again because I'm teaching tomorrow evening. It feels good to be resuming these practices. My period of withdrawal seems to be ending.

There's good news about the Pfizer vaccine trial this morning, and lots of people tweeted and emailed me about it, knowing that I've been part of it. They issued a press statement that says their vaccine is 90% effective in early results. No data yet. Manufacture and distribution, of course, are another question, complicated by the need to store it at very low temperatures and the need for two injections.

That was a good appointment. I'll get an x-ray later this week to check for arthritis or a compression fracture, or any serious problem related to osteoporosis. I'll start PT on the same day.

Ben Carson has covid-19, and he attended the election day event at the WH.

From Infectious Disease Advisor: Eli Lilly and Company announced an agreement with the US government to supply 300,000 vials of bamlanivimab (LY-CoV555) 700mg, an investigational neutralizing antibody for the treatment of mild to moderate coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Gov. Murphy is imposing some restrictions on bars and restaurants -- time limits, seating restrictions. I don't know if these things matter or not; Fulop fears they'll just drive more people into gatherings at home. He's imposing a few other restrictions as well. Henry and I will not be affected, nor will most of the people we know. Recent NJ test positivity rate: 7.5%.

The head of Trump's legal fight against the election results has been diagnosed with covid.

I met Sheree at LSP and we walked over to Caven Point. It was another

gorgeous day and lovely to see her.

Tuesday, November 10

Ken is back, and I had my first workout with him today. It was good to be back. At 1:30, I met with the Oakland letter-writing group for a bit of a most-mortem and to find out how how people are feeling -- some discouragement, even a touch of hopelessness; some optimism. Everybody seems determined to keep working. I recalled that I sometimes hear African-American leaders say that hope is a choice.

I left the group a bit early so that Henry and I could go over to downtown Manhattan and have a coffee with Preston. It was the first time I've been on the PATH train -- there were no more than 5 people in our car, I think, and it felt quite safe. We got coffees and sat together at an outdoor table, then walked around the WTC memorial for a little while. H and I took the ferry home, and we got to sit on the upper deck, which was so lovely it cheered me up more than anything. A very pleasant day.

I'm just reading on twitter that my Assemblywoman, Angela McKnight, has tested positive for covid-19.

Covid Tracking: 131K new cases (a record), 62K in the hospital (a record), 1.3K deaths.

Covid in NJ, from north-jerseynews.com: Gov. Phil Murphy called the new COVID-19 cases announced on Nov. 10 "devastating" as the state's health commissioner expects the daily New Jersey count in the thousands to be the new norm for the foreseeable future. Officials reported a six month single-day high of 3,877 on Nov. 10, as the seven-day rolling average for new cases has increased 55% over a week's time and 233% in a month to 2,568. "I think our reality is that we will have between 2,000 and 3,000 cases a day going forward," said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli.

The Trump team continues attacking the election, but apparently most Americans believe the outcome. Many people are unnerved that Trump is firing Pentagon leaders and replacing them with loyalists. I don't know

what to think, but it's all a bit frightening. As Chris Hayes tweeted, it makes it all the more obvious how important it was to put our heart and soul into defeating Trump.

Wednesday, November 11

I was up for a while in the night, feeling anxious about the election. I think I woke up with a dream that Michigan had flipped back to Trump. What finally helped: Joe Biden just keeps projecting calm confidence, and I bet he's friends with more generals than Trump is. The Trump lawsuits against elections have all failed. They don't even allege fraud in the courtroom, reserving those allegations for social media. They seem to be determined to rile up their base, and I'm sure they have a number of reasons to do so -- fundraising, the Georgia Senate races, the next presidential election. But Trump is going to have to leave.

Steven Portnoy @stevenportnoy  
*NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE as of 10:50aET:*  
*Biden 77,320,380 (51%)*  
*Trump 72,221,116 (47%)*

*CBS NEWS PROJECTION:*  
*Biden 279 electoral votes*  
*Trump 217 electoral votes*

*STILL UNDECIDED: AZ / GA / NC*

I've been doing a few small chores this morning -- zoom scheduling the Saturday AA meetings, ordering sneakers, cancelling my subscription to the Jersey Journal. I wanted to switch from paper and digital to just digital, but I got stuck on a long hold and the web interface isn't any better, so I just cancelled it.

Covid Tracking's numbers show new records in cases and hospitalizations -- there are more people in hospitals now than in the first two peaks. It's clear now that deaths have been climbing for about a month.

NY and NJ are both increasing their restrictions in the hope of limiting the

spread of covid -- we're back to trying to flatten the curve, though I don't hear that expression as often as I used to.

What I'm trying to limit is my consumption of news. I've been so tense today, and even headachy, and I just have to put some distance between our loud and urgent national conflicts and my own quiet life.

The Hoboken AA meeting was lovely this evening. I'm about halfway through my chairing commitment, and maybe I'll sign up to be GSR in January -- I've always wondered what that was like.

Thursday, November 12

I had a workout with Ken this morning at 9, which was interesting because Henry and I slept late, not waking up until 9. I think we've both been anxious and tired, and it's a gray morning, perfect for sleeping in. Then I didn't have a lot of time before I had to walk to the pain management place to get an x-ray and start my PT. The best part was getting some massage of my upper back, and then a tens treatment with heat packs. I think it really helped me drop some tension. I'm still working on trying to pay less attention to the news and my fears about it, and more attention to my own life, where things are comfortable and drama-free. I remember the guardian meditation I learned at one of the tai chi trainings, and I added the practice of listings things I'm grateful for, and now I feel pretty terrific.

I took a nap with Henry this afternoon, even after sleeping so much last night. Avoiding the news seems to be helping.

Covid Tracking: a new record number of cases; ever more people in hospitals. Hospitals all over the country are reporting that they're overloaded. (Oh, no, I almost left out "are" in that sentence, just the way they talk on network news. Ugh.)

Corey Lewandowski has tested positive for the virus. Apparently this new WH outbreak is pretty substantial.

Friday, November 13

It's a quiet, rainy morning. I started watching some of the TV shows I've recorded over the past few days, but Stephen Colbert's anger about the transition process was too upsetting when I'm trying to get myself calmed down, so I stopped.

Washington Post: More than 130 Secret Service officers are said to be infected with coronavirus or quarantining after Trump's campaign travel.

I'll do some tai chi instead, and stretching and PT exercises. I attended a zoom sword practice, and even though my sore right hand compelled me to use a wooden spoon, I still had a good time.

After that, I read the most recent Carl Hiaasen farce, and I think that was the first time I've read an entire book since at least March. I avoided the news, and I'm feeling a lot better.

At 6, I attended a training to text or phone bank with Fair Fight Action, the group started by Stacey Abrams. I didn't realize that it's technically a non-partisan group, but I think it would still feel good to text with them. I'm still not sure about phone banking, but the objective of their current campaign is to encourage people to apply for vote by mail ballots, and that should be a lot easier than working on a persuasion campaign.

Record covid numbers again, of course, and still climbing. We're going to hit 200K cases a day quite soon.

Saturday, November 14

I've had a quiet and pleasant day. I went to the Barrow St women's AA meeting at 10. Covid wasn't the topic, but at least 3 women mentioned it -- a woman at the meeting is concerned that she has it; another's father has it; a third is worried about the people she supervises at work.

A few of the women helped me test the new zoom url we'll use from now on. I'll be the zoom host!

I did my stretches and my PT. After lunch, I took a nice long walk over to Liberty State Park. It was a beautiful sunny day with a high in the mid-



fifties. I called Christine while I was walking, and got to talk with her for a while. I listened to Marc Maron's first intro after Biden won the election, and his relief and delight made me laugh out loud.

The Covid Tracking numbers are out. Even though it's Saturday, the case numbers barely dropped -- 163K -- and the hospitalization count climbed over 69K.

Polly sent me an article from STAT saying that Pfizer is planning to offer the vaccine to members of the control group when they end the trial! That could be a while, of course, since the default end date is sometime in 2022.

NBC News with good news for DACA: A federal judge in New York City on Saturday said Chad Wolf has not been acting lawfully as the chief of Homeland Security and that, as such, his suspension of [protections for a class of migrants brought to the United States illegally as children](#) is invalid.

The governor of Nevada has tested positive; the governor of Connecticut is quarantining after an exposure; Elon Musk has tested positive.

The NJ Spotlight email update this evening says that NJ's number of cases today was a record -- even exceeding the peak last April. That's so bad. (Sue told me that it's really hard to get tested right now in Hoboken -- you have to make an appointment about a week in the future.) Transmission rate = 1.35. Daily positivity = 8% statewide. The number of hospitalizations is still only a quarter of its peak in April (8K).

Sunday, November 15

Henry was wondering yesterday whether he had allergies or a cold, and now he's pretty sure it's a cold. It's hard to understand how he could have a normal cold after all the precautions we take, but there it is. He doesn't go anywhere but down to the lobby most days, to Hudson Greene maybe once a week, and to the gym most days since it has reopened. He wears a mask everywhere, but maybe a few particles floated in all the same, or maybe his hand-washing isn't perfect -- I know mine isn't. I hope he doesn't have a bad cold, and I hope I don't get it.

I wonder if it's a rhinovirus or a coronavirus or what! From an NIH site: "More than 200 different viruses are known to cause the symptoms of the common cold. An estimated 30-35% of all adult colds are caused by rhinoviruses." From WebMD: Rhinoviruses are most active in the early fall, spring and summer; coronaviruses in winter and early spring. RSV and parainfluenza are other viruses that cause colds. "The causes of 20%-30% of adult colds, presumed to be viral, remain unidentified."

I did my stretching and PT exercises, and now I'm doing some texting with Fair Fight Action. I sent my 300 or so texts and managed the replies. We'll see if I'm brave enough to make phone calls later. I have my doubts, and I don't feel that I have to with so many volunteers working so hard. In the longer term, I'm waiting for Vote Forward to step up with a campaign.

I made lentil stew and then caught up on some of the shows I had on the DVR. Several of them referred a lot to the election, and my eye started twitching again, but it wasn't too bad. Slowly, slowly, more Republicans are saying that the transition should start, but Trump is still blocking it with unsubstantiated claims about election fraud.

Monday, November 16

Today's big news is that the Moderna vaccine appears to be at least as effective as Pfizer's. Moreover, Moderna has figured that they can store the virus at normal refrigerator temperatures for up to 30 days without loss of effectiveness.

The time until most people in the US will have access to vaccines is starting to seem manageable -- 7 months, maybe? I expect to keep masking up for quite a while longer, maybe for the rest of my life in some circumstances. But it won't seem like a risky act to go to the eye doctor or the dentist.

Hurricane Iota has become very powerful and might reach category 5 before making landfall in Central America.

An editorial in the LA Times says that the PPE pipeline is still broken, all these months after the first surge.

Mobilize, the organization that schedules volunteer activities to support progressive candidates and causes, just sent me email telling me that I joined 87 events in this election "with Swing Left, 2020 Victory, OH 2020 Victory, DemCast USA, Back To Blue PA, Mobilize, ONECampaign for Michigan, Fight For NC, Vote Forward, Tom Malinowski for Congress, Fair Fight, and Andy Kim for Congress." And they said I was among "107,570+ people in NJ, 3+ million people nationwide, 5,039+ campaigns and organizations."

Tuesday, November 17

At the moment, I'm doing very little political work. I'll attend a training tomorrow evening about a letter-writing project for the Georgia run-off election, and I'm still waiting for Vote Forward; I just signed up to text for Fair Fight Action for two hours on Saturday. So it's time to start returning to tai chi classes, working around my schedule for physical therapy. I also just asked my family if they'd like me to set up a zoom for this Sunday or wait until Thanksgiving.

I'm glad I bought a zoom account. I'm not using my own account for tai chi classes, as it turns out, but I'm using it to host social gatherings (family, college friends) and, starting on Saturday, an AA meeting.

From Carl Zimmer: Worldwide, covid is killing about 9000 people every day.

I didn't realize how much vote totals were continuing to rise. Biden got more than 79 million votes, 5.7 million more than Trump.

Senator Chuck Grassley (R), 87 years old, has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

I haven't cried since it was determined that Biden has won, and I have been convinced that I need to -- my body has been tense for months and months, armed against the threat of Trump and Trumpism. Finally at PT today, I got to cry a bit -- flat on my belly on the massage table, with a TENS machine working my upper back, its work reinforced by two heating

pads. I started my regular meditation, or prayer, thanking our many guardians -- of our health, physical and mental, and of our democracy -- and finally the tension loosened a bit as I cried into my mask. As I walked home, I wondered what I could listen to or read that would help me cry more, and I settled on The Wizard of Earthsea series. It was the Tombs of Atuan I thought of first, but I'm reading in sequence, and Ged's struggles with his stiff-necked pride felt very real and relevant.

Wednesday, November 18

We're not going to have water for a few hours today, so we've filled a few buckets and the bathtub.

Trump fired his chief of cybersecurity for saying that there was no significant fraud in the election. Most of Trump's lawyers have quit him, so Rudy Giuliani, out of courtrooms for years, is now leading the charge. A Republican official has accused Lindsay Graham of instructing him to throw out ballots in highly Democratic counties. The Republicans in a local Michigan area said they would refuse to certify the election; they either backed down or were overridden, I'm not sure which. The GOP efforts to suppress votes in this election, most particularly Black votes, are continuing unabated, and few Republicans speak out against it.

I'm trying to take a news vacation to reduce the tension in my neck and shoulders, but I'm doing a poor job.

Vote Forward letters are available, so I printed some out. I think they're going fast. I'm amazed that volunteer energy remains this high -- I thought people would want a break after the election, but everybody's still bearing down.

After doing all my stretches and PT (while listening to dharma talks), and a couple of round of tai chi, and after lunch, I settled down to read the second Earthsea book. I did get to cry a bit more, and another thing that helped my clotted emotions was punching sofa cushions a bit earlier today.

I put on my warm winter coat and took a walk at about 2:30, over to Van Vorst Park. Walking felt good, and allowed me to spend some time with my

thoughts and feelings. I started my guardian meditation, and then noticed that I've been feeling alone. I'm very far from alone, in fact. Everyone is feeling the isolation of the pandemic, and all good-hearted people are disturbed and dismayed by the behavior of the GOP. And there must be a lot of people who worked hard on this election who are feeling a certain disorientation, as well.

It's been a busy few hours -- a board meeting of my NYC tai chi school; a letter-writing training with the Maryland group "Do The Most Good," which ran longer than expected so that I was a couple of minutes late to the AA meeting I was supposed to be chairing! Luckily, they handled my absence brilliantly, and passed the reins back to me shortly after I appeared.

Now I've signed up for two sets of letter-writing zooms organized by Gail and Val on the west coast. I may not manage to make it to all of them because of conflicts with either PT or strength training, but I'll sure try.

Covid Tracking: over 150K new cases again today; 80K people in the hospital; 1,869 deaths. NYT: the virus has now killed 250,000 people in the US.

Thursday, November 9

This tweet seems correct:

[Joe Hagan @joehagansays](#) This isn't about election fraud really, it's about damaging Biden's presidency & paralyzing his government through disinformation & demagogueary [sic]. The intent is to keep a lock grip on Trump's conspiracy-damaged supporters & wield them like a hammer against democracy.

In the NYT today, something I've been starting to say to people: All over the world, workers are soaping, wiping and fumigating surfaces with an urgent sense of purpose: to fight the coronavirus. But scientists increasingly say that [there is little to no evidence that contaminated surfaces can spread the virus](#). In crowded indoor spaces like airports, they say, the virus that is exhaled by infected people and that lingers in the air is [a much greater threat](#).

Youyang Gu, who was known for the accuracy of his SARS-CoV-2 forecasting early in the pandemic, has resumed modeling. He estimates that about 507K people are infected each day (as of Nov 8), with 6.1 million infected on that date and 48 million (14%) infected so far. (He publishes his confidence intervals as well, eg the number currently infected on that date was between 4M and 9M.) His site is [covid19-projections.com](https://covid19-projections.com)

When Angie came to clean the apartment, Henry and I went to the Short Hills Mall to walk around and window shop. When we first arrived, it was wonderful to be in a new place, seeing new things. By the time we left, I felt like I was overdosing on candy.

Toward the end of my session with Ken, he told me that he was just hired as a contact tracer! That's thanks to the links I sent him when he was in Costa Rica. That's so cool. I found the link again and forwarded it to Sue, who is also looking for a better job.

Once again, a record number of new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

I skipped tai chi class in favor of hosting a zoom reunion with college friends. We're looking at old pictures from those days -- I'm in a couple of them, to my surprise.

[Kyle Griffin @kylegriffin1](#) Breaking NYT: Two separate New York State fraud investigations into Trump and his businesses, one criminal and one civil, have expanded to include tax write-offs on millions of dollars in consulting fees, some of which appear to have gone to Ivanka Trump.

Also NYT: Trump's Attempts to Overturn the Election Are Unparalleled in U.S. History / The president's push to prevent states from certifying electors and get legislators to override voters' will eclipses even the bitter 1876 election as an audacious use of brute political force.

I'm still too stressed to watch Rachel Maddow, but I see on twitter that her partner Susan has been sick with covid -- very sick. I'm watching a video clip in which she explains this.

[Scott Gottlieb, MD @ScottGottliebMD](#) Contextualizing individual Covid risk.

With about 1.5% of U.S. population currently infected, in a restaurant of 47 people there's a 50% chance at least one person has Covid. In North Dakota, a room of 10 people has a 50% chance a person with Covid is present (Bernstein Research)

Friday, November 20

[Andy Slavitt @ASlavitt](#) Pfizer and BioNTech are submitting their application to the EUA for their vaccine candidate [sic] today. Review and approval would be in early December.

Moderna is expected to be close behind.

@MittRomney Having failed to make even a plausible case of widespread fraud or conspiracy before any court of law, the President has now resorted to overt pressure on state and local officials to subvert the will of the people and overturn the election. It is difficult to imagine a worse, more undemocratic action by a sitting American President.

NYT: Trump has asked aides what Republican officials he could call in other battleground states, not just Michigan, in his effort to prevent the certification of results that would formalize his loss to Biden, several advisers said.

An encouraging tweet: [Michael Thomas @in\\_pubs](#) I don't know which one of my followers needs to hear this. But here goes. I work at the Pentagon EVERYONE is referring [sic] to [@JoeBiden](#) as the [#PresidentElect](#) We are preparing for a full transition of power. Don't worry. This nightmare will be over soon.

Senator Rick Scott (R) has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Donald Trump Jr has tested positive, and so has Rudy Giuliani's son.

As vote counting continues, these are the totals according to Dave Wasserman on twitter:

Biden 79,732,083 (51.0%)  
Trump 73,731,087 (47.2%)

Covid Tracking: Yet another new record number of cases and hospitalizations. Yet another very high number of deaths, pulling the 7-day average up to about 1,400 a day. It remains true that the number of people in the hospital has been climbing nearly monotonically since September 22.

Trump has been courting state GOP leaders to tamper with election results, hoping they'll fail to certify vote counts and seize the chance to appoint their own electors. He invited two from Michigan today, they leaders both houses of the state legislature, and they went. Their statement is a clear rebuke, it seems to me. They spend about four paragraphs on the extreme need in Michigan for another relief package, and then two paragraphs to say that the vote was legitimate and they're not going to try to intervene.

I had a quiet day. It was lovely out, so I left a little early for my 11:00 PT appointment so I could do a little extra walking. And then skipped my tai chi class later in favor of starting to read the next Wizard of Earthsea book.

While I was at PT, I concentrated on my gratitude practice, starting with thanking my poor stiff neck for all it does for me, then spreading out to thank other parts of my body, and then remembering so many things I loved about my childhood home: the maple tree in the front yard I loved to climb in, the asparagus and rhubarb patches in my dad's garden, mowing the lawn, other favorite trees, the robin's nest outside my bedroom window. It was a treat, and very moving, to enjoy those memories and to remember my childhood without regrets or criticisms.

Saturday, November 21

My first attempt at hosting the Saturday morning AA meeting went off without a hitch. All the work done by Sandi and other group members to get the word out about the new link seems to have been successful, because we had a good number of women.

I took a walk afterwards, because I didn't want to miss this spectacular day, and I'm going to start texting for Fair Fight Action at 2:00. Also, I need to finish my Vote Forward letters and get them out of the way so I can start on the other letters.



I'm trying to work out how to do the other letters. The label templates they sent didn't work, but I was able to download a template from Avery to match the labels I bought the other day and create a page for each. However, when I looked up how to print labels on our printer, it turns out that manufacturer recommends against it. I'm going to try PostNet, the printing and mailing outfit up on Grove, on Monday. They've been good to work with before.

I can address the envelopes and start writing the letters this weekend. I hope I don't have to write all those addresses by hand!

It's Saturday, so the Covid Tracking numbers are always a bit lower, but they're still dreadful. Hospitalizations keep rising through the weekend, unlike the other numbers.

Sunday, November 22

Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R, Georgia, and part of the current run-off election) tested positive.

It's been a quiet day here. Still on a news diet, including my usual satirical news programs. I check in on twitter to stay informed, and look at an occasional article, but if there's a note of outrage or panic, I get the hell out of there. I worked on my letters from the Cobb County Democratic Party, attended a qigong class, worked on the letters a bit more, then attended a sword class. I'll work on letters a bit more and then it's the family zoom. I've done part of my PT, but I still need to finish.

I'm starting to wonder if I'm coming down with whatever Henry's been having this past week. He never got tested -- and he hasn't isolated, for that matter -- because he's pretty sure he's been having a garden variety cold. I'm still not sure -- no sore throat, but a little bit more nose blowing than on a normal winter day. I just remembered that if I do have some kind of infection, I have to report it to the vaccine trial people.

Covid Tracking: Numbers are always down on Sundays, but hospitalizations keep rising.

Had a nice family zoom this afternoon. Rick and Jan, Betsy and Ed, Nancy and Don -- they all have larger bubbles than I do, and will be spending holidays with a small number of people they don't usually see, but they're all being careful, given that. Henry and I are pretty extreme, it would seem!

Monday, November 23

Well, I definitely have a cold, though it may not be any more than that. I'm going to call the PT place before going in and ask them if they'd like me to skip a few sessions.

The AstraZeneca vaccine results are out today, and it looks pretty good. They specifically tested for the difference between one and two doses, and the two-dose regimen is 90% effective. They intend to make their vaccine available low-cost world-wide distribution, and 3 billion doses are planned.

The Guardian: The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has tested negative, having received a positive result on 9 November and spending time in a government hospital, he has said.

The Washington Post: *President-elect Joe Biden has selected Antony Blinken, one of his closest and longest-serving foreign policy advisers, for the position.*

That seems appropriate to me. The Department of State, among others, has been trashed during this administration and is in need of repair by someone who knows how it should be run.

I was asked to skip PT today and keep an eye on my symptoms, maybe returning tomorrow.

I wrote to my contact at the vaccine trial and asked whether I should swab my nose for testing.

Natalie E Dean on twitter: Phase 3 trials are conducted under idealized conditions. Everyone receives all doses on time, that have been properly stored, etc. The primary analysis is restricted, like to people without

antibodies at baseline. We call the resulting estimate "vaccine efficacy." / Think "vaccine efficacy" as our best guess at the biological protection of the vaccine. When we talk about "vaccine effectiveness," this can refer to a few different things. One is "real-world effectiveness." If conditions are less than ideal, how well does the vaccine work? / Another concept of effectiveness is the "effectiveness of a vaccination program." Efficacy is an individual-level measure of protection, which we also call a "direct" effect. But vaccines can also have "indirect" protection, by preventing infection or reducing infectiousness. / We can measure the impact of a vaccination program at a population-level, instead of at an individual level. If you have an area where 50% of the population is vaccinated, versus an area where no one is vaccinated, how much better off is the partially vaccinated area? / A common post-licensure (Phase IV) design is a cluster randomized trial where the outcome is disease across both vaccinated and unvaccinated community members. These are known as "effectiveness trials." / Thus, while vaccine efficacy is narrowly defined, effectiveness is a broader term that captures both how well the vaccine works under real-world conditions, and, for overall effects, its population-level impact.

The biggest excitement today has been that I wrote to the vaccine trial people that I had a mild cold, and they leaped into action. They asked me to report my temperature, take a nasal swab, and call the company that will pick up the same from me and deliver it to them. So many possibilities! I suppose it really is a light cold, but it could be a mild covid infection, and I might or might not be vaccinated.

Because PT was cancelled, I was able to attend a tai chi class taught by Mark Preston, in which he led us through a set of exercises to increase our relaxation and heighten our awareness of our hands. Very nice.

Soon, I'll be joining a letter-writing session led by Gail G. Yay! I'm still plowing through my letters from the Cobb County Democrats.

The courier came during the training. He had a cold stage box, and I dropped my sample in it, and off he went. And I wrote 110 addresses, so now I can start writing the letters and stuffing the envelopes as I go.

Trump's creature at the GSA has finally agreed to release funds to begin

the transition. I assume that means the rest of it can happen as well, like access to current members of the administration. Whew.

85,836 people in the hospital with covid-19.

Thursday, November 24

I still have this mild cold, and I'm finding it a bit weird -- I feel a little bit of congestion, and a little bit of tightness in my chest. That's unusual for the third day of a cold. So I cancelled my PT again, because it still seems remotely possible that I have a mild case of covid-19. I was able to do my workout with Ken, though, just a little bit slowed down.

I went out to get some more stamps, and I decided to see what the line was like at the pop-up SARS-CoV-2 test site on Barrow. The line wasn't long, so I got a test. They used a nasal swab like the type I administered to myself; I hope I did it well enough, but I'm sure. This nurse moved it around a lot more inside my nose. Oh, and they say it's a PCR test, not one of the quick antigen tests, which is good. The results will come in 5 to 7 days, which is fine. I don't need it urgently, but I want to know for the record. I'll be pretty surprised if the test comes back positive.

I worked for at least an hour and a half and only finished 13 letters. I'm going to have to buckle down if I want to finish these on time.

I made some red beans and rice for dinner, and that worked fine. Now it's time to do some preparation for the evening tai chi class.

[Ted Lieu @tedlieu](#) I look forward to stories about how [@realDonaldTrump](#) and [@GOP](#) ignored, disrespected and enraged the overwhelming majority of hard working Americans. And we are everywhere, from small town diners to church gatherings to big cities. Republicans should listen to those they forgot.

Votes are still being counted, and we now know that more than 80 million people voted for Biden and Harris, more than 6 million more votes than Trump and Pence.

Covid Tracking: over 88K hospitalizations. Cases and deaths continue to climb, though (again) the smoothed curves are more meaningful because of the lack of weekend reporting, and they say roughly 167K new cases and nearly 1600 new deaths.

Wednesday, November 25

I spent some time this working working on my letters to Cobb County democrats. The instructions say to have them in the mail before Sunday, and I'd like to finish sooner. I've been keeping an eye on the Vote Forward letters, and all the names have now been adopted! They've been working on encouraging people to request absentee ballots, like the campaign I'm working on; Gail said they'd be starting a GOTV campaign once this one is finished, so I think there will be a lot of names again soon.

I vacuumed the apartment and had lunch, and now Vote Forward has added another million names and addresses, with a target date of December 7th. It'll be interesting to see how many are adopted in time.

I finished a few more letters, then did my PT exercises and took a walk. The Wednesday AA meeting was lovely tonight, a celebration meeting. I acknowledged my 38 years of sobriety, something I haven't done at a meeting in years. Some of the women said that this time of year is called hurricane season for alcoholics, or the Bermuda Triangle, because of the challenge of all the holidays. That was never my challenge, really, but I love the expressions.

Covid Tracking: hospitalizations and deaths keep right on climbing. Here's a good summary: [Trevor Bedford @trvr](#) Another update on [#COVID19](#) circulation in the US. With today's report we're seeing an average of ~172k daily cases reported compared to ~157k a week ago, and we're seeing ~1650 daily deaths reported compared to ~1200 a week ago.

He goes on to say that the rate of growth in cases seems to be slowing, but that we can expect deaths average over 2500 cases a day in a couple of weeks.

[Michael L. Barnett @ml\\_barnett](#) A very grim milestone: the US has reached

100,000 deaths in nursing homes from COVID-19 That is **\*\*7.7%\*\*** of all nursing home residents nationally. 1 in 13. Things have never really gotten better. Testing is a struggle, PPE and staff are daily challenges.

That's a really high proportion of the 262K official deaths to date.

Trump has pardoned Michael Flynn.

Thursday, November 26

And it was Thanksgiving. I finished a few letters this morning, and did my stretches and some PT. Ken begged off our workout session because he's working so hard to finish his training to be a contact tracer. I attended a Thanksgiving AA meeting with a Barrow Mansion group.

At 1, we walked over to Satis to pick up our Thanksgiving dinner. It was a drizzly morning, but by then the rain had all stopped, and the clouds were wonderful all afternoon -- every type, every size of cloud, with big patches of pale blue sky.

We zoomed with Jim T for a while after our meal, and we got into a discussion about the obsolete practice of trying to be first in the Yellow Pages by naming your business Aaron Aardvark, like a former New Brunswick used furniture store, or by stringing a ridiculous number of As before your name, like a locksmith Henry recalled in NYC. I had friends in college who named their dog Hero Zzyzyx and then put their phone number in his name so they could tell people to just go to the last name in the phone book, and there they'd be.

Friday, November 27

I just got my SARS-CoV-2 test results, earlier than expected, and I tested negative. That is not surprising, but it will good to be able to report that to the PT place and to the chiropractor.

I did a couple of chores this morning, confirming with my speaker for Wednesday's meeting and working on the tai chi school holiday party planning. I worked on my letters to Georgia voters -- I think I have 11 to go,

and I will be able to get them in the tomorrow's mail, so they're right on time.

What else? A slow day. I did my stretches and PT, participated in a 30-minute sword class over zoom, and took a walk along the river in the afternoon, so I had a reasonable amount of physical activity. I don't think I talked with anyone but Henry today, though I texted a little bit with Preston, who is at his mother's house in Delaware.

Saturday, November 28

The Saturday morning meeting was beautiful, as usual, with people talking about what had attracted them to AA -- safety, honesty, warmth.

I did my stretching and PT, attended the UWS letter-writing group. As usual, I had to mute them because so many of them love to hear themselves talk, but I finished the Cobb County letters and started on Vote Forward letters, so it was all worth it.

I took a sunset walk, as I've been doing for the past few days. I'm walking so late because it takes that long to get myself moving, but it's a lovely time of day to walk along the river. I get to enjoy the magical evening light and watch the moon, which is nearly full today, get brighter and brighter.

Sunday, November 29

[Taniel @Taniel](#) GOP has done this trick for years: introduce bills to restrict access to voting in the name of fighting the \*loss of trust\* caused by (their) allegations of fraud, even when they end up granting there's no basis to them. Pay attn to this sleight of hands now. It's everywhere.

Evan face-timed me for the first time in months, I think, to play some Roblox games. I happily skipped my second tai chi class for the opportunity. Afterwards I finally got a chance to talk with Jeremy for a while, too. I missed my walk, but it was worth it.

Covid Tracking: Cases and deaths at weekend reporting levels; hospitalizations still climbing. Over 93K people in the hospital with covid-19.

Monday, November 30

Moderna will file for US and European approval today, or has already filed.

[Kai Kupferschmidt @kakape](#) More stunning data out from Moderna's vaccine trial today: Of 196 [#covid19](#) cases 185 were in placebo group / 11 in vaccine group - 94,1% efficacy / All 30 severe [#covid19](#) cases were in placebo group - so that's, well, 100% for now / There was one [#covid19](#) death in the placebo group

The UK has 10 clearly defined bands identifying groups who are eligible for vaccination, in order, starting with older adults in care homes and care home workers (1), then all those at least 80 years old and health and social care workers (2). Then it steps along by age and risk (3-10) until everybody is eligible (11). I think we're still waiting for a similar announcement here.

[Juliette Kayyem @juliettekayyem](#) 3 immediate and major efforts on vaccine distribution: 1)Tuesday, CDC votes on priority groupings, including essential workforce and teachers. 2)Friday, all states required to submit finalized distribution plans to CDC. 3)Soon, FDA authorizes emergency use. And so it begins

Henry might fall earlier in the list than I do -- he's a few years older and I believe he qualifies as obese. As for me, I'll see how things work out in the vaccine trial I'm participating in.

Just got back from PT. It's windy and rainy today, but I fared ok.

Hospitals in Rhode Island are at capacity.

Scott Atlas just resigned, and not a moment too soon. Way too late, really.

Covid Tracking: I don't think we've caught up on the numbers of cases and deaths yet; hospitalizations still climbing. Over 96K people in the hospital with covid-19.



Tuesday, December 1

I'm just re-reading the letter Pfizer/BioNTech sent to all study participants:

*We know that access to a potential vaccine, if an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) or similar approval is granted, is top of mind for many trial participants. Pfizer and BioNTech are actively exploring potential ways to change the study to create a process that would allow interested participants in the placebo group **who meet the eligibility criteria for early access** in their country to “cross-over” to the vaccine group in the study. To make a change like this, the companies would first need input and approval from regulatory authorities. We will update you as we have more information on this.*

I hadn't noticed that phrase in bold before, and had been imagining that I could jump the queue. Apparently not; fair enough. So now I'm even more interested in the criteria that will be voted on at the CDC today, to learn when healthy people over 65 will be eligible for vaccination.

My workout with Ken was good. He talked a lot about the frustrations and mysteries of the training he been going through to be a contact tracer -- too much information that had to be crammed too quickly (and which he has already forgotten!), the instruction not to take on other word without any information about when he'll start earning at this job, so many being being trained at once that he isn't sure he'll have any support once he actually starts doing it.

PT was even better -- the massage, followed by heat and stim, is so relaxing that I try to find some emotions to release. Today I focused on grief and worry for all the suffering in our country. People are going hungry, Trumpers are ignorant and angry, healthcare workers are exhausted and wounded.

I had a restful afternoon at home, loafing on the couch. When I went down to get the mail, I found a lobby full of firefighters and residents, and couldn't get back upstairs! The manager sent this email: The cause of the alarm was a rooftop air handler which malfunctioned with a blown fuse and created some smoke, which activated the fire system smoke sensors. The

faulty unit has been deactivated.

Not everyone in the full lobby was wearing masks properly, so I stood near the door to be in an area of maximum air exchange.

And votes are still being counted! Biden/Harris have received over 81 million votes, 6.9 million more than Trump/Pence. Bill Barr just said the DOJ had not seen any fraud that would have changed the election result; conspiracy-minded right-wingers (Giuliani, Lou Dobbs) are flipping out.

The CDC advisory panel recommends that the first wave of vaccinations be offered to health care workers and residents of care homes. (I'm going to use the British term because it's so much more compact than ours.)

I just heard a new word on the BBC news, and it turns out to be spelled "taikonaut" -- it's a Chinese astronaut.

Covid Tracking: Some of the numbers of catching up -- 2500 deaths were reported today. There are over 98K people in the hospital.

Wednesday, December 2

I've been sleeping great this week, about 9 hours a night. And no wonder I slept so well yesterday -- a workout with Ken, PT, walking to and from PT, and then teaching tai chi at night.

Today should be quieter. My agenda is simple: stretching, including PT stretches, tai chi, housecleaning, letter-writing, and an AA meeting in the evening.

The UK just approved the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine, and we probably won't be far behind.

Vermont's Secretary of State is echoing the words of Georgia's, saying that Trump's attacks on vote counters have to stop. "This has to stop. The wild, unfounded accusations amplified by [@realDonaldTrump](#) need to stop. In a voice message today, our elections team was threatened with execution by firing squad. Silence is complicity."

While Democrats are working to get out the vote in Georgia, some of the conspiracy-minded Republicans are urging people not to vote. Let's hope the QAnon folks listen to that advice!

It's 3 in the afternoon now, and it's been a productive day. The house is sparkling, I've done several loads of laundry, and I've worked on letters to Georgia voters. I have plenty of time for some stretching and PT exercises before cooking dinner -- I have a nice variety of vegetables to roast.

Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) was sworn in today, after winning a special election last month.

I roasted a pile of vegetables for dinner. The Hoboken women's meeting went well -- my last invited speaker was Lee, who I heard at the Seattle meeting a few months ago. This is my last month to chair.

Covid Tracking: A LOT of deaths were reported today, 2,733. There are over 100K people in hospitals with covid-19. We are told that the numbers will remain high, and perhaps continue to rise, throughout the winter. Things are not good in NJ -- around 4K new cases per day. Fortunately, many of these represent less serious cases, or so I infer from the fact that about 3K people are hospitalized (we had a peak of 8K people in hospitals last May) and fewer than 50 people (on average) are dying each day.

Thursday, December 3

I woke up early today and felt very unsettled. I think I'm feeling anger and resistance at the idea that I have to change some of my habits to keep from hurting my neck and shoulders. But maybe it isn't so much time at the laptop as it is time playing solitaire on the ipad while I listen to podcasts. That can be a lot of time with my head angled down and with very little motion of my head.

As part of the discussion about whether to now vaccinate people in the Pfizer and Moderna trials who got the placebo, Fauci suggests this: Dr. Fauci sketched out one possible way to balance the obligation owed to people who took the placebo against the need for more data from the trials.

Vaccine makers could give everyone who got the placebo the vaccine — while also giving everyone who got the vaccine the placebo. None of the trial participants would know which order they got the doses. The trial could therefore continue to be blinded.

I had a good workout this morning, and I'm still a bit shaky! I have PT in an hour, then a restful afternoon. Tai chi class this evening.

I'm feeling a bit beat up after my workout and PT -- Aditi gave me a pretty tough back massage. Whew. I had a very quiet afternoon.

David R. Liu @davidrliu More encouraging data on #COVID19 #SARSCoV2 mRNA vaccines, but antibody and T-cell response data suggest that it takes ~6-8 wks from first dose to full protection. People are mistakenly envisioning return to normal as soon as a vaccine is in hand. Don't fumble on the 1-yard line!

NYT: California will impose stay-at-home orders in areas where intensive care units are close to capacity. U.S. virus deaths surpass the spring peak as the country reports more than 14 million cases. N.Y.C. surpasses a positive test rate last seen at the end of May. Cyberattackers are targeting government and corporate vaccine distribution plans. Facebook says it will remove coronavirus vaccine misinformation.

[Strong Language](#) [@stronglang](#) Pandemic + pendejo = pandejo / Aka covidiot

Dave Wasserman @Redistrict BREAKING: Biden's national popular vote lead just surpassed 7 million (4.5%)... Biden 81,264,673 (51.3%) Trump 74,210,838 (46.9%)

Covid Tracking: The Thanksgiving weekend numbers are definitely showing up now. More than 2700 deaths reported again, and over 210K cases. More than 100K people hospitalized.

Friday, December 4

I worked on letters a bit this morning -- tomorrow is the mail date, and I'd

like to get a few more finished in time. (Whoops, I was wrong about that -- I have a few more days.) I had an early lunch and went to Florham Park before my chiropractor appointment. I walked around for about 25 minutes near where I used to work, and where I took so many walks around the loop and through the neighborhood. I saw the spot where there was once a big hawk perching on a handrail, and where I once saw a tiny fawn under a little tree in the parking lot. I remember when one of the Exxon buildings closed down and there were acres of old Steelcase desks on their parking lot. Of course the Jets facility is on that property now, and to my chagrin, a large area that was once meadow and forest now holds a development full of very unattractive houses. Still, it was nice to be reminded of the many pleasant years I had there.

The chiropractor worked on acres (it seemed) of tension in my neck and back, and even in the fronts of my thighs, so that I feel like crying now, as I did after my massage yesterday. What a year it's been. And my experience this year has been so much less challenging than it has been for so many -- we have plenty of food, our housing is comfortable and secure, our pension checks keep arriving, we haven't lost anyone to covid or been sick ourselves, and we haven't been persecuted by this cruel government. But pain is all around us.

One of the restaurants at Liberty State Park has just been closed by order of the Jersey City Department of HHS because they hosted a large indoor gathering of NY young Republicans. Such gatherings are illegal here, as they are in NYC, and photographs show that no-one at the event was masked. Gov Murphy was disgusted, and so (clearly) was the Fulop administration.

The Atlantic reports that hospitals are running out of beds all over the country: Iowa, Nebraska, and more. "Many states have reported that their hospitals are running out of room and restricting which patients can be admitted. In South Dakota, a network of 37 hospitals reported sending [more than 150 people home](#) with oxygen tanks to keep beds open for even sicker patients. A hospital in Amarillo, Texas, reported that COVID-19 patients are [waiting in the emergency room](#) for beds to become available. Some patients in Laredo, Texas, [were sent to hospitals](#) in San Antonio—until that city stopped accepting transfers. Elsewhere in Texas, patients

[were sent to Oklahoma](#), but hospitals there have also [tightened their admission criteria](#)." **"The bulk of evidence now suggests that one of the worst fears of the pandemic—that hospitals would become overwhelmed, leading to needless deaths—is happening now.** Americans are dying of COVID-19 who, had they gotten sick a month earlier, would have lived. This is such a searingly ugly idea that it is worth repeating: Americans are likely dying of COVID-19 now who would have survived had they gotten September's level of medical care."

Covid Tracking: Almost 225K new cases; over 2500 new deaths; almost 102K hospitalized.

Saturday, December 5

CNBC:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has quietly revised its estimates for the disproportionately deadly toll that Covid-19 is taking on communities of color.
- After adjusting for age, the CDC now says Hispanic and Black Americans are shown to die at a rate of almost three times that of White Americans.
- The agency previously said Hispanic and Black Americans were dying at a rate of about one and two times higher than Caucasians, respectively.

The discussion at the women's meeting this morning is making me how much I view myself as separate, not reliant on other people and not affecting other people. When they say in AA that we need to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, I think I can understand that as opening myself to other people in a different way. It is part of the way my thoughts and feelings about gratitude have been evolving. I noticed recently that being grateful to a person feels more profound than being grateful for something. When we're standing and embracing the Tao, one of the things Jonathan tells us to look for is "something hard or foreign" so that we can release it. There's something hard that feels softer when I experience this direct gratitude.

The Upper West Side group was frustrating, as usual, because everybody

has an opinion on everything and absolutely must voice it. All the same, I finished quite a few letters in an hour, then stopped so I could take a walk before sunset. I love these evening walks, with the glorious evening light. For a while, the cluster of buildings around the World Trade Center tower were absolutely beautiful. The highest floors reflected gray, but those below the top reflected a brilliant, unlikely shade of blue.

I sorted some of my papers, a task I perform 2 to 4 times a year, while Henry and I watched the news. Trump is in Georgia, still harping on the election and yelling at the governor to overturn the results, while Georgia Republicans wish he would shut up about that and really rile his people up to vote in the runoff election in a month, with two tight and critical Senate slots on the ballot. With all his yelling about fraud, there's a chance he might discourage Republicans from voting -- that is the cherished hope of all Democrats, of course, with no evidence to support it.

Covid Tracking: Average new cases per day: over 150K; average deaths per say: something over 2K; over 101K people in the hospital.

Sunday, December 6

It's a sunny morning, and the dust on our dark floors looked like a thin layer of snow! I gave the bedroom, living room, and kitchen a quick vacuuming before breakfast. Waiting to hear from Sheree, who texted me yesterday that she's having a hard time. This has been a very tough period for people are single and extroverted, and she is both. She has an aversion to zoom, too, which is where my social life is playing out.

I just got back from my late afternoon walk, and I'm really wiped out, more than I usually get. It was a busy enough day, but it shouldn't have been exhausting. I did my stretches and some of my PT, adding some of my chiropractor's suggestions using a lacrosse ball. I had two tai chi classes and talked to a couple of people on the phone, along with continuing to work on my letters.

Good God, Rudy Giuliani has finally tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. How did he last this long?

[Geoff Bennett @GeoffRBennett](#) By NBC's count, at least 53 people in Trump's orbit have tested positive for COVID-19 [sic]. That number includes administration officials, campaign staffers and close contacts. (The count starts with Hope Hicks' diagnosis in October and includes the Giuliani announcement today.)

Oh boy, the last Vote Forward letter has been claimed, so I don't have to do any more. Whew. I'll finish my last two and take 100 letters to the post office tomorrow.

Monday, December 7

I did my stretching and rolling around on a lacrosse ball this morning, followed by some qigong and tai chi. What a lovely way to start the day. I'll drop by the post office on my way to PT in a little while.

I think I have to spend less time on my laptop, but whoops -- I can't use zoom when the laptop is connected to the external monitor. Maybe I need a desktop <and> a laptop. I'll have syncing issues, but it might be better for my neck and shoulders.

I attended a volunteer meeting of All on the Line, the group started by Eric Holder and Barack Obama to work on the redistricting process about to start in this coming year in response to the 202 census. I don't know that it's something I want to work on, but it sounds like important work and I was glad to learn about it.

Covid Tracking: The number of people in hospitals continue to grow, but the rate of growth has slowed. One sad possibility is that some pretty people are being sent home because there's no more room.

Tuesday, December 8

WaPo: [Plastic surgeons say business is up, partly because clients don't like how they look on Zoom](#)

It's been a busy day -- morning stretches, working out with Ken, going to PT, resting in the afternoon, then teaching tai chi at night. At least 3 hours



of physical activity, of all different types and styles.

The Supreme Court declined to interfere in the election. The covid numbers are bad, but maybe the increases have slowed? Maybe not -- I've heard a few people talking about post-Thanksgiving increases and hospitalizations are still rising: 104,600 people in the hospital nationwide.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine data released by the FDA today look spectacular, and I can hardly wait to be vaccinated -- or to learn that I have been, which would be very surprising.

Wednesday, December 9

I have a quieter day today -- nothing formal until a board meeting of the tai school at 4, and the Hoboken women's AA meeting at 7:30. We have someone coming to service our HVAC system. In the meantime, I'll do my stretches and PT exercises, do some housecleaning, and draft an invitation for our tai chi school party next week.

Two chores done: I found someone in the building who wants my external monitor, and I drafted invitations to the tai chi holiday party.

I've been trying to stay away from the computer, so I'm looking for chores to do in the apartment. It's not sunny, so vacuuming is not as easy -- on a sunny day, every speck of dust shows up on our dark floors. So that makes it a perfect day to clean the windows, something that I've been meaning to do since last March, when we first started spending so much time at home. I finished the living room and I'll get to the bedroom later -- on the next sunny day, I'll find out if I'm doing a good job or not by the degree of streakiness visible on the windows.

NYT: More than a third of Americans live in areas where hospitals are running critically short of intensive care beds, federal data show, revealing a newly detailed picture of the nation's hospital crisis during the deadliest week of the Covid-19 epidemic.

And we know that beds aren't the only problem -- staffing is short, and we hear that PPE is still scarce in some places.

In England, two recipients of the Pfizer vaccine had a severe reaction, so they're advising people who carry EpiPens to avoid taking it at this time. That may be a problem for my daughter-in-law. I hope a workaround of some sort will emerge.

Covid Tracking Project: COVID-19 continues to surge through the country's long-term-care facilities. Our count from last week shows 51,574 new cases reported—the highest weekly number of the last 6 months. Nationally, deaths increased by 27% from last week.

Polly just texted me that her partner Linda was accepted into the J&J vaccine trial, and she had the shot yesterday. Today she's a bit achy and feverish, so it looks like she's in the test group. Exciting! It was brave of her to join the trial, given the requirement to postpone getting the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines in the next few months.

My 3-month term as chair of the Wednesday Hoboken women's meeting ends at the end of this month, so I agreed today to serve as the GSR for two years. That will entail attending a district meeting on the 2nd Thursday of every month and chairing the business meeting of this local group on the 3rd Wednesday. As long as I've been sober, I have almost no clue what happens at the district level, so this should be interesting.

Covid Tracking: Oh, these are bad numbers. More cases, more people hospitalized, more people dying. Curves all heading sharply up.

Thursday, December 10

What a crazy period this is. Trump is concerned only about fighting the election, with one objectionable and unfounded lawsuit after another, and he seems to have convinced a large percentage of Republicans that the election is being stolen. SARS-CoV-2 is spreading wildly. Biden is soberly putting his administration together.

Ellen DeGeneres and the governor of Pennsylvania have tested positive for the virus.

It's been a busy day: workout with Ken at 10, PT at noon, walking along the Hudson with Sheree at 2.

Friday, December 11

A couple of vaccine makers are reporting setbacks today, which makes me feel especially lucky that Pfizer and Moderna have been so successful so fast.

I went to see my chiropractor today again, to really try to improve my back, neck and shoulders. I'm using the laptop in a different setup that puts the screen at eye level, and I ordered an iMac.

Since I was in Florham Park, I looked around for a place to take a walk, and settled on the Frelinghuysen Arboretum. It's a former estate, like the Duke property but not so grand -- America seems to be covered with these -- and it must have a generous endowment, because the grounds are lovely, with a wide variety of trees, most of which seem to be labeled. The woods there are the tidied up woods I seem to prefer, with someone taking out all the trash. Ha, I mock myself, but there it is.

Covid Tracking: The numbers are still going up. I don't know how many people in the country are shedding virus right this minute, but 108K people are in the hospital and the 7-day average of daily fatalities is over 2300. The NYT says 356K people have died.

The US has bought enough vaccine from Pfizer and Moderna to vaccinate 50 million people with each vaccine; now that they've been approved, it's tough to get more quickly, but the administration has bought enough for another 50 million from Moderna, to be delivered between April and June. I wish it would come sooner. There could be a long wait after the initial 100 million people are vaccinated. Pfizer could deliver more by June.

Let's see, the population of the US over 15 is about 330 million - 60 million = 270 million. Let's suppose, optimistically, that 75% of the people would like to be inoculated. That's about 190 million. Yes, there could definitely be a long wait after the first 100 million get the vaccine.

Murphy thinks he'll be able to inoculate 70% of NJ residents by May. That may be too optimistic.

I just signed up for four texting shifts with Fair Fight in late December and early January.

Saturday, December 12

The FDA approved the emergency use of the Pfizer vaccine last night, so here we go.

Sarah Zhang in The Atlantic: It will take several months to vaccinate enough Americans to resume normal life, and this interim could prove long, confusing, and chaotic. The next six months will almost certainly bring delays in vaccine timelines, fights over vaccine priority, and questions about how immune the newly vaccinated are and how they should behave. We've spent 2020 adjusting to a pandemic normal, and now a strange, new period is upon us. Call it vaccine purgatory.

The Chairman of the Texas GOP just suggested that "law-abiding states" should secede after their disappointment with the Supreme Court last night. It's been tried, and maybe they'd like another Civil War. I would suggest they pause and take a deep breath.

A couple of hours after the regular Saturday morning AA meeting, I logged in to a zoom session about Marty Mann, one of the first women in AA. She had an astonishing life -- born in 1904 to a wealthy family that then lost its wealth in the 1929 crash, she associated with an array of interesting women including Amelia Earhart, Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, Gertrude Stein and Alice B Toklas. She later spent time in mental hospital in, I think, New York State where she read an early copy of the Big Book and before long got sober. She lived in the West Village and had a house in Cherry Grove, where she became known as someone who could offer support to literary alcoholics from Dorothy Parker to Carson McCullers to Tennessee Williams -- or maybe some of those folks were just her friends.

After that presentation, I listened to a couple of women qualify, and then I had had enough and spent the afternoon loafing around. I was ready for a

very quiet day.

Sunday, December 13

In my life, there have been a few silver linings during the pandemic. My tai chi school learned how to offer remote classes, and will doubtless continue to do so. I got reconnected with AA. I like my new hair style. That's a funny list. It's embarrassing to mention my hair -- such a tiny silver lining for such a massive cloud!

Gov. Murphy tweeted that the first vaccinations in NJ will be administered to health care staff at University Hospital in Newark on Tuesday. That is momentous!

[Carl Zimmer @carlzimmer](#) Total US covid19 deaths are now at 297,971. The current seven-day average (2,396 deaths a day) is the highest since the pandemic's start.

I'm listening to TWiV, and learning that the Sanofi/Glaxo vaccine trial is not going well. Like Astra Zeneca, they had a dosing error, setting them back up to a year. Their plan is to do a comparative trial instead of a single trial.

The best thing I learned from this podcast episode is that Pfizer is indeed planning to do what Fauci described, and to call in all trial participants as they become eligible for vaccination and give them whatever two injections they didn't get the first time around. I'll just have to ask whether they're going to use NY rules for me, or NJ rules.

[Alexis C. Madrigal @alexismadrigal](#) This is hard to wrap your head around: On November 10, we crossed over 1,000 deaths per day on average. Now, just a little over a month later, states report more than 2,400 fatalities per day. Despite the vaccine news, we'll see weeks more of this.

Monday, December 14

The Electoral College is voting today, and one state after another is doing what's expected. At the same time, the first vaccinations are being administered, and it's moving to see hospital staff getting some protection

after everything they've been through. And it's the anniversary of the Sandy Hook massacre of elementary school children. So it's an emotional day. Oh, and early voting has started in Georgia. And the US reached 300,000 official deaths from covid-19.

The Electoral College has officially chosen Joe Biden. Will Trump actually concede? Not without continuing his claims of fraud, I'm sure.

I went to PT today and did little else. A load of laundry, ran the dishwasher. Fine with me.

Bill Barr resigned, effective late this month, only about a month before Joe Biden is sworn in. We don't know why. Maybe Trump is going to do something that even Barr couldn't countenance.

[Eric Topol](#) [@EricTopol](#) In just 1 month, the number of hospitalized patients increased from 60,000 to over 110,000 for the first time today [@COVID19Tracking](#) That is w/ much quicker turnaround than in the earlier surges and turning many patients away who would have been admitted. Past the break point.

Over 110K people now in the hospital with covid.

We got news yesterday and today of a significant cyberattack, with Russian intelligence having breached email at several federal agencies.

Tuesday, December 15

It looks as if the Moderna vaccine will be approved this Friday. It's amazing that these vaccines are emerging quickly, but I'm afraid it doesn't feel fast.

Biden's inaugural committee actually has a chief medical officer, and he's advising people not to travel to DC for the inauguration. This is so wise and such a change that I'm tearing up.

I had a workout with Ken this morning; took one of MO's qigong classes for the first time in a while (conflicts with PT appointments have interfered), and I really enjoyed it.

I've been thinking about denial lately -- the way I forget that I can't use a laptop for long, and I can't eat much chocolate, and the way I forgot about that positive hepatitis C test for a year (thankfully it was a false positive). It's amazing the way we can blank out uncomfortable knowledge.

Washington Post: "Videos of vaccine deliveries are making people burst into tears." What a wonderful headline!

Biden will nominate Pete Buttigieg to be Transportation Secretary.

I took a good walk along the water this afternoon. It was about 40 degrees, not too cold yet. A big snowstorm is coming tomorrow night, so I want to get outside while it's still easy to do so, and I missed the last couple of days.

Covid Tracking: Almost 113K people hospitalized.

I heard somebody say that we're moving from virus hell to vaccine limbo. Actually, we're in both at the same time. It's going to be a difficult few months.

Here's what the virus people at Mt Sinai told me trial participants in email today: *If you are a health care worker defined as paid and unpaid persons serving in a health care setting who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials and wish to take part in the Vaccine Transition Option, please fill out this [survey](#) to let us know if you are interested in being unblinded and willing to receive actual vaccine if you previously received placebo.*

*If you are not a healthcare worker, you will be eligible for unblinding at the time of your 4th visit. This would correlate with your 6 month visit. If you received placebo, you will be eligible to receive vaccine during that visit. Depending on when you enrolled in the study, the Visit 4 is occurring between early March and first week of May. Should other categories of vaccination open to the public for which you may be eligible, our study site will contact you to confirm eligibility.*

My "Visit 4" is scheduled for March 18th, but maybe I'll have a chance to be vaccinated sooner if people over 65 are approved for vaccination in January or February.

I just read that the US has secured enough vaccine to inoculate 150 million people by the end of June; according to the NYT tracker, I'm in line behind about 118 million people. So it may be true that March 18th is a good deal.

Wednesday, December 16

It's about 9pm and a snowstorm is raging outside. We could have a foot of snow tomorrow, and I'll be slogging through it to get to PT at 2pm -- it's good to realize my appointment is late, anyway. Henry suggests I take the PATH from Exchange Place to Grove St, which might make the trip easier.

It looks as though there may be another round of covid relief going out -- apparently McConnell is willing to deal because he believes that a second relief bill would help the GOP Senators in the Georgia run-off election. It seems to be impossible to be more cynical than Mitch McConnell.

My day was good -- I vacuumed this morning, went to PT at noon, and chaired the Hoboken women's AA meeting this evening. The tai chi school had its annual holiday party online this evening, and I only managed to go to 20 minutes of it -- it seemed like a pleasant conversation was happening, though maybe not quite what the organizers had in mind. It doesn't matter, I don't think.

Covid Tracking: Deaths keep increasing, hospitalizations keep increasing. "Long-term care cases and deaths both increased by the most we've seen since late May. A staggering 5,094 deaths and 61,097 cases last week made it one of the most devastating weeks for LTC residents and staff yet."

Henry spotted online that there's an outbreak at our senior community, with some staff and over a dozen residents infected. We don't know if they're in independent living or in other units.

Thursday, December 17



It's still windy and snowing, and there are at least a few inches on the ground. It's hard to tell how much from the 33rd floor.

Emmanuel Macron has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 (to be pedantic, he's testing positive for the virus, not for covid-19, as the headlines are reporting).

Studies of excess deaths show that the virus is having a serious impact on young people as well as on the elderly. [Carl Zimmer @carlzimmer](#) "In fact, July appears to have been the deadliest month among this age group in modern American history. Over the past 20 years, an average of 11,000 young American adults died each July. This year that number swelled to over 16,000."

Had a good workout with Ken. Figured out a zoom problem: I can attend a zoom meeting on one device while simultaneously starting one on another device. In that way, I'll be able to host an AA meeting while attending a general service meeting, or whatever they call them.

I'm just reading an assertion that the deaths reported on any given day reflect deaths that occurred 3 to 6 (are those the right numbers?) weeks ago, because it takes a long time to file the application for a death certificate, process that application at the state and/or local level, and prepare the report. Wow. We've been imagining that it happens almost instantly.

I walked to PT this afternoon, and it wasn't bad. Most of the downtown sidewalks are clear, though there are snowy gaps in front of some buildings. Some of the intersections are very swampy, and I forgot to wear my boots!

After PT, I came home and took a nap. It's a lot of work to have a workout and PT on the same day, and I had made myself nervous last night worrying about my zoom problem.

The story of Russian hacking just gets worse and worse. DOE, National Nuclear Security Administration, DHS -- they're in computers of many critical agencies.

One of Biden's closest advisors just tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Get that man vaccinated!

We had a good tai chi class this evening. This was definitely a busy day.

Covid Tracking: Deaths and hospitalizations keep right on climbing. Over 114K people in the hospital. Hospitalizations and new cases in NJ have just dropped a tiny bit. May that be a trend.

Hospitals in the LA area are not finding beds fast enough for the people that are coming in.

Friday, December 18

NPR on the Russian hack: So far, the list of affected U.S. government entities reportedly includes the Commerce Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the Pentagon, the Treasury Department, the U.S. Postal Service and the National Institutes of Health.

Tim Herrerra in the NYT on the vocabulary of 2020: Black Lives Matter, Blursday, contact tracing, doomscrolling, essential workers, flatten the curve, frontline workers, hydroxychloroquine, mail-in ballot, pod, bubble, quaranteam, PPE, N95, remote learning, social distancing, super-spreader, and that tired word, unprecedented. And more, including a bunch of portmanteaus based on zoom.

NYT: Within the month, Dr. Ghaly said, the number of patients requiring I.C.U. care in Los Angeles County “could easily exceed” the 2,500 licensed adult beds by a thousand or more. ... In California, the authorities have [ordered an extra 5,000 body bags](#), activated a mutual aid network for morgues and coroner’s offices and stationed 60 refrigerated storage units in counties around the state to handle remains. Health officials in Orange County said they would roll out [three field hospitals](#).

[DailyPlum @DailyPlum](#) Jeeves was in the sitting-room messing about with holly, for we would soon be having Christmas at our throats.... -Jeeves & the Greasy Bird

Here's a great headline on vox.com: "Americans don't think like citizens. They think like shoppers." That reminds me so much of my Uncle Kingdon, who one year declared himself a retired consumer.

If true, his may be the first episode in the vaccine availability wars: [rat king @Mikelsaac](#) There is an enormous demonstration going on at [@Stanford](#) Hospital right now carried out by staff, who are protesting the decision by higher ups to give vaccines to some administrators and physicians who are at home and not in contact with patients INSTEAD of frontline workers.

I see that "rat king" is a reporter at the NYT, so it is likely to be true.

Murphy tweeted about setting up six vaccination "mega-sites" in early January to vaccinate frontline health care workers (category 1A), essential workers (1B), and adults over 65 with high-risk medical conditions (1C). I can't find a consistent definition of the phases, though -- in some spots, 1C is defined as the the union of these two sets (adults over 65, people with high-risk medical conditions), while in this tweet, he defines it as the intersection.

General Fucking Flynn (or should that be fucking General Flynn?) wants Trump to activate the military to overturn the results of the election. The Army Chief of Staff repudiates that fascist proposal.

The PPE loan to our tai chi school has officially been converted to a grant, thanks to the persistence of our treasurer. What good news! It's not a big amount of money, something under \$5K, but that's significant for us.

The Covid Tracking numbers are out, and just as nightmarish as usual. Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths all climbing. For the past few days, I thought maybe cases had stopped increasing, but here they come. Almost 115K people in the hospital. The smoothed curve showing the average number of daily deaths is showing about 2500 deaths per day. Just shocking. And of course there's other collateral damage as some hospitals are above capacity.

The FDA has approved the Moderna vaccine. (Note that it could be spelled

ModeRNA!) Millions more doses are on their way next week, with the emphasis still on front-line health care workers and older adults in congregate care facilities.

On top of the deaths from covid, there have been a record number of opioid overdoses this year.

The Secretary of the Interior tested positive for the virus.

Saturday, December 19

The morning AA meeting went well. Evan FaceTimed me before and after the meeting for two sessions of deploying an army of monkeys to pop balloons, so it's been a fun day. Now trying to do some work on Christmas -- and I say "work" advisedly, because that's how I feel about choosing and preparing presents.

There seem to be some problems with vaccine deliveries, and after Florida blamed Pfizer, Pfizer released the following statement: "Pfizer is not having any production issues with our COVID-19 vaccine, and no shipments containing the vaccine are on hold or delayed," the statement read. "This week, we successfully shipped all 2.9 million doses that we were asked to ship by the U.S. Government to the locations specified by them. We have millions more doses sitting in our warehouse but, as of now, we have not received any shipment instructions for additional doses."

I don't know what that reflects. Disorganization at the federal level may be the best guess, but maybe Florida is not doing its job, either.

For the first time, I'm hearing authorities (Trevor Bedford, to be specific) suggest that the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine might need regular updating, like the flu vaccine, to keep up with "antigenic drift" in the virus. He goes on: I think most of the question now is more about rate of antigenic drift rather than whether or not it will occur. I don't know if we're talking 2 years or 10 years for a vaccine update.

In response to a claim that new variant observed in the UK is more infectious:

[Vincent Racaniello @profvrr](#) More uninformed [#COVID19](#) reporting from [@nytimes](#) there is ZERO evidence that a new variant is more transmissible. The skeptical scientists are correct - the variant was simply introduced and predominates by virtue of the founder effect.

I had a singularly unproductive day because of all the time I spent playing with Evan, and that's fine! I did do my stretches, including some PT stretches, and that's good for a quiet Saturday.

Covid Tracking: Hospitalizations have been flat for three days. Dare we hope that this wave is slowing down?

Sunday, December 20

Evan facetimed me to play Bloons before I was even out of bed this morning! I played a couple of hours with him, which is a lot of fun but hard on my poor old neck. I will not complain, though -- just when I'm missing Evan the most, here he is looking for my company! That will help me with my holiday blues.

ACIP, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, is meeting today to develop recommendations guiding the selection of the next groups to be vaccinated. Helen Branswell is live tweeting it. (Various quants without public health background are weighing in, too, in op-ed columns and on twitter, and various public health people are pissed at them for their presumption.) The next few paragraphs are hers:

*Nancy Messonnier of the CDC, who was sidelined early by Trump for being accurate about the dangers posed by SARS-CoV-2, says that "there will be enough vaccine to vaccinate 20M people in Dec, 30M in January and 50M in February."*

*More from Branswell:*

[#ACIP's #Covid19](#) vaccine priority recommendations for

*Phase 1b are people 75 yrs and older & front line essential workers. (Much smaller group than all essential workers.)*

*Phase 1c: people 65-75 & people with high risk med conditions & other*

*essential workers.*

*They estimate that there are about about 87 million essential workers. And they figure that groups 1a, 1b, and 1c taken together include 200 million people, so they'll only be able to vaccinate half that number by the end of February.*

*And the Feds have not offered any money to help with vaccination, and the states are strapped.*

*[#ACIP](#) member Peter Szilagyi said Phase 1b may not take very long, especially as a lot of people have indicated they may want to wait a while to get vaccinated. Stressed work needs to be done to promote vaccine confidence.*

*Last tweet for this thread. [@CDCgov](#) just published figures on the number of vaccines that have been shipped so far, how many have been administered. [Boxed] Distributed doses: 2,838,225 / Administered doses: 556, 208*

My March 18th date with Pfizer is sounding a lot better after reading that.

Congress has finally reached a deal on a second covid relief package.

Covid Tracking: Hospitalizations are still not increasing, perhaps because some of the midwestern and western states seem to be slowing down. Plenty of states remain in crisis.

Monday, December 21

I put something together for the kids for Christmas, and just have to work out when to mail it. I have to think quickly about something for Sheree, since I might see her on Christmas day. And I'm always late to send something to Christine, so there's no rush. And that's all I'm doing for Christmas this year, I think.

Lots of discussion on twitter about the new variant of SARS-CoV-2 in the UK (not a strain, according to TWiV, because it hasn't yet been established

that it has different behavior). And lots of discussion about the second covid relief package and the budget bill. There's a lot to like and a lot to dislike.

Wow, according to the CNN wire service, Alexey Navalney pretended to be a member of the Russian security service and managed to trick a Russian agent into telling him how he was poisoned -- with a nerve agent applied to the inner seams of his underpants. That is some astonishing counter-spy work.

I had PT today, and then a workout appointment with Ken.

I'm starting to do a texting shift for Fair Fight. The host, a young African-American woman, said that "Georgians are showing out in droves," and I have to look up that expression. Someone commented in the chat that captioning isn't working, which reminds me some deaf political activists like to do texting! As always, it's great to see all these volunteers -- 101 people on the call. If each one sent 900 texts, as I did, that's 90K texts in one evening! And phone banks all over the place. It feels good to be back at work. I have three more texting shifts before the election on January 5th.

Oh good, Biden was vaccinated today.

NYT: Roughly six million doses of the newly authorized [Moderna vaccine](#) are being shipped to more than 3,700 locations around the country this week, adding to the nearly three million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine that were dispatched mostly to health care workers starting last week. According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and Prevention, 614,117 doses had been administered as of Monday morning.

More countries have banned arrivals from Britain out of concern over this new variant.

NYT: The current upheaval over the virus mutation grew after Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain said that it had been shown to be 70 percent more contagious than other variants. The 70 percent estimate of greater transmissibility [is based only on modeling](#) and has not been confirmed by lab experiments, said Muge Cevik, an infectious disease

expert at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and a scientific adviser to the British government.

Tuesday, December 22

[The Antarctic Report @AntarcticReport](#) Sadly [#Antarctica](#) is no longer free of COVID-19! The Chilean army today reported 36 personnel at O'Higgins Base have tested positive (26 military and 10 civilians); the station has been undergoing the annual exchange of personnel over the last few weeks

Let's not forget that the reason this covid relief package passed is that Mitch McConnell wanted to help the GOP Georgia senators in the current runoff race. He is a cynical bastard.

I went to the dentist. He and his staff will be getting vaccinated soon, probably at the center in Rockaway, one of six that NJ is setting up to vaccinate large numbers of people.

Dr. Fauci was vaccinated today. I'm intentionally ignoring all the fuss about Republican Senators and covid deniers who are getting vaccinated when many health care workers have not yet had that opportunity.

[Laurie Garrett @Laurie\\_Garrett](#) New York has 1.2 million healthcare workers, 19.5 million people. So far the State has received 96,000 doses of [#COVID19 #vaccine](#). So going.....At this rate it will take 3 months just to vaccinate the healthcare workers.

Trump is pardoning a bunch of people who have done really despicable things.

But on the brighter side, NY just adopted automatic voter registration!

Covid Tracking: Hospitalizations climbing again (nearly 118K), deaths still climbing (averaging over 2500 per day).

[Matthew Gertz @MattGertz](#) To sum up: The president is terrifying his staffers by plotting a coup in Oval Office meetings with conspiracy



theorists, he's pardoning corrupt political allies and war criminals, and he's threatening a relief package for the pandemic that killed 3,100 Americans today.

Wednesday, December 23

Our housecleaner Angella is back from Brazil and finished with her quarantine, so we're tidying up to be ready for her. I found a basket to contain all my crochet paraphernalia, and tidied up my small mask collection. I think I'll wear a K95 mask to go to PT today, and I'll try out the new spray for eyeglasses that purports to eliminate fog. Wouldn't that be great! If it doesn't work, I'll revert to plan B, which is to put my glasses in a case and carry it in my purse. The blurriness of myopia and astigmatism is not quite as bad as the blurriness of fogged-up lenses.

Some people in my circle have begun to be vaccinated -- we have some nurses in the family (Allie and Jan's sister). The US has reached a deal for 100 million more doses from Pfizer, sometime in late spring and summer, I think. I'm relieved that there are still some people in the government who are trying to function normally.

Debate and speculation about the UK variant continues. Vincent Racaniello is highly skeptical; others seem more convinced. Well, I'm not sure about the credentials of the people who are more convinced -- are any of them virologists? I googled around and found that Christian Drosten, a prominent German virologist, is also skeptical.

More on the expression "show out" -- this tweet from Stacey Abrams: BREAKING: Nearly 2,000,000 Georgians have voted early in the Jan 5 Senate runoff election. Let's show up and show out to elect [@ReverendWarnock](#) and [@ossoff](#) . Make your early voting plan today: <http://iwillvote.com>. [#gapol](#) [#gasen](#)

Covid Tracking: New cases have been flat for a few days, leveling off at about 210K per day. That's a hell of a plateau. "An encouraging trend: in the last week, COVID-19 cases have decreased in 22 states across the US." Hospitalizations are still climbing, at nearly 120K; deaths still climbing as well, averaging over 2.5K per day. On the evening news, it was

reported that many millions of people are planning to travel for the Christmas holidays.

On the news, they talk as though it's been proven that this new variant in the UK causes increased transmission, and they're talking more about a similar new variant out of South Africa.

My Wednesday AA meeting was lovely, and now I turn to Twitter and see that Trump continues to pardon despicable people, and people in front of whom he dangled pardons to persuade them not to testify against him. We are disgusted and appalled at the corruption and the vileness, but we are not surprised.

Thursday, December 24

The pardon of Manafort is particularly galling. Let's hope somebody else can put him away one day.

It's strangely warm today, nearly 60 degrees out with a big storm on the way from the southwest. So I took a long walk. It was too windy to walk along the Hudson, so I found myself heading to Liberty State Park. I called Jim for a long conversation, and listened to TWiV the rest of the time. They're interested in the new variant but not yet entirely convinced. One hopes we'll do more sequencing in the US to see if it's already here.

[Dr. Tom Frieden @DrTomFrieden](#) There have been at least 400,000 more deaths in 2020 than in 2019—a staggering 15% increase. The largest yearly increase since 1919.

Rep. Eric Swalwell @RepSwalwell If you voted to pardon Trump of impeachment, spare all of us your hot take on Trump corruptly pardoning his friends. [That was clearly a response to Ben Sasse, though there may have been other GOP Senators criticizing Trump's corrupt pardons.]

Tony Fauci is starting to say that the goal for vaccination compliance should be close to 90%.

Covid Tracking: Cases still flattish; hospitalizations still increasing. The

next week or so, the data will be spotty.

Friday, December 25

Well, it's just another day in our household. I'm feeling a bit forlorn, I suppose. I have nothing on my calendar until 5:30, when I'll attend an hour of the local Alcathon; that hour is hosted by the Hoboken women's group. I may attend at some point before then if I'm feeling sorry for myself.

There was a hell of a storm last night, but temperatures remained in the 40s and 50s, so the remaining snow from the last storm was nearly all washed away. The streets definitely needed a good cleaning. I think people don't clean up after their dogs very well when there's snow on the ground -- or maybe the behavior is the same but there's nothing to wash the dog crap away.

We should have a quiet news day, anyway.

Well, that didn't last long. There was a large explosion in Nashville across from what is being called "the AT&T office building, the tallest skyscraper in the state," and police say they believe it was "an intentional act." We're not even hearing much speculation about who might have done it, or why.

I went to a couple of alcathon hours, as it turned out, and enjoyed them both. The second hour was zoom bombed by, basically, a living breathing dick pic. The host got rid of it quickly, and I guess it was more funny and puzzling than disturbing. Two women talked about family conflicts that arose over Christmas, and I didn't notice until afterwards that both conflicts were with other people who were unwilling to take appropriate protections from SARS-CoV-2.

We got dinner from Sky Thai, and loved the novelty of take-out food!

Saturday, December 26

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WKRN) — Many AT&T customers have taken to social media to voice their displeasure and inconvenience with the delay in restoring service to many areas affected by an outage caused by [an](#)

[explosion in downtown Nashville on Christmas morning. / ... /](#) The service outage has affected [911 emergency systems](#), [hospital systems](#), and has reportedly caused issues with other systems such as ATMs and card readers. / The issues are affecting a broad spectrum of not just AT&T services but also [T-Mobile](#) services in several southeast and Midsouth metropolitan areas including telephone, internet, and television service.

The Saturday morning meeting was good. I activated the waiting room feature because of the zoom bombing yesterday, but I didn't see anybody new waiting there.

Millions of people are about to lose benefits and Trump is screwing around and making trouble, refusing to sign the only benefits the GOP Senators are willing to approve.

I took a nice long walk over to Liberty State Park again, talking to my sister Nancy most of the way. It was cold, about 30 degrees, but I warmed up nicely after a while.

Listening to TWiV. Daniel Griffin agrees with Vincent that it's probable that the increase in spread in the UK is due to human behavior rather than to the new variant. And he suspects that the importance of ivermectin in some countries probably indicates that many people there have parasites, not that the drug is active against SARS-CoV-2. And he adds something I don't remember hearing: among people discharged after hospitalization with covid, about ten percent die within two months.

Sunday, December 27

Henry and I are having a quiet day. I enjoyed my early afternoon sword class; I did my stretches and PT in the morning. I don't know that I'm going to do much more than that today.

After keeping the focus on himself for the past several days, Trump finally signed the relief bill.

Monday, December 28

Now <this> will be a busy day. I'll leave before long to go to Mt. Sinai for a follow-up visit after I reported having cold symptoms. I'll have a workout session at 4 and text bank for Fair Fight at 6.

The Mt. Sinai visit was very interesting. The clinic I visit was very understaffed, first because many people are on vacation, and second because one staff member was diagnosed with covid, so nearly everyone remaining is quarantining at home. So my interview was conducted over the phone by one of the nurses in quarantine, and my blood was drawn by Geneva, the woman who I thought was a receptionist but turns out to be a person with medical or nursing training who works on medical trials. Before covid, she was working at the blood bank on HIV research, and was initially a bit scared to be reassigned to this new job.

It's a warm day, with temperatures in the 40s and 50s, so I took a short walk in the park before my appointment (in a light drizzle) and went back to the park (in the bright sunshine!) afterwards. I had forgotten about the Conservatory Garden, a lovely peaceful spot. Next time, I'll walk a little bit north and visit the pond.

I saw a spot where a statue honoring Dr. James Marion Sims had been taken down, and it is so emblematic of 2020 that I have to record it here. I've heard about him, and there was a plaque reminding me of his fame and his infamy. According to wikipedia, he is known as "the father of modern gynecology," but he did much of his groundbreaking work by operating without anesthesia on enslaved Black women with fistulas, and that is the stuff of nightmares. Actually, severe fistulas are nightmarish all on their own.

After I got home and had lunch, I did my stretching routine, which now takes about 30 minutes, and was ready for a good workout with Ken. I should stop typing now and take a shower, so I can be ready to start texting in an hour.

Michael Mina on the slow pace of vaccination in the US: "I think this was largely expected," [@michaelmina\\_lab](#) says on the slow vaccine rollout in the U.S., having administered nearly two million doses. "We have seen a lot of overpromises from this administration and we are now seeing the

consequences of that."

WaPo headline: Air travel hits record high amid winter holidays.

I'm starting to think that time on the laptop is only part of my problem, but that all the time I spend leaning over my laptop and ipad are doing just as much harm to my neck and shoulder muscles. [ Huh? ]

Russia's deputy Prime Minister has just admitted that the official death toll of 55K is incorrect, and that the true number is greater than 186K.

I'm on the introductory zoom before texting with Fair Fight gets started. It looks as though it'll be a shorter session than last week -- about 400 voters.

The House is calling Trump's bluff, if that's what it was. They just voted to give \$2K in covid relief. 44 Republicans voted yes; 2 Democrats voted no. Is that in addition to the \$600? No, an increase to \$2K. I can't imagine McConnell will take it up, but maybe it will help Ossoff and Warnock.

Covid Tracking: All the data looks incomplete except the number hospitalized, which has hit a new record again, over 121K people.

OK, just downloaded another 300 names. Start sending more texts!

Thursday, December 29

Here's another person (a geneticist, perhaps?) who doubts that the UK variant is more transmissible:

[Prof Francois Balloux @BallouxFrancois](#) The new 'UK [#SARSCoV2](#) variant' (lineage B.1.1.7) which has recently gone up in frequency in the UK has been identified in numerous countries including in Denmark, where its frequency remained at ~1% in mid-December. / If the 'UK variant' were more contagious, its frequency should increase wherever it is present. Otherwise what we're likely observing are random inter-lineage fluctuations, typical of epidemics (see lower panel below; UK variant in dark orange).

I just read a hilarious article on grubstreet.com about a bucatini shortage

that has been plaguing pasta lovers this past year. I had never even heard of bucatini, which is a bit larger than regular spaghetti noodles and has a hole down the middle, making it hold more sauce. Apparently the problem has to do with the flour used and the level of enrichment with iron, but mysteries remain. Who asked the FDA to investigate DeCecco's bucatini? No-one knows.

[Leana Wen, M.D. @DrLeanaWen](#) Here's the math: If the goal is to reach 80% of Americans vaccinated with a 2-dose [#covid19](#) vaccine, it will take 10 years at our current pace. We are at 1 million vaccinations a week. To get to herd immunity by June 2021, we need to be at 3.5 million vaccinations a day.

And now the apartment has been vacuumed, even under the couch, and other people have already claimed all the Fair Fight texts to be finished off, so I don't have to do them!

Novavax is starting its Phase 3 trial.

In Florida, people over 65 lined up outdoors overnight for a chance to be vaccinated.

McConnell has blocked a motion to vote on the proposal to increase the size of the relief checks.

I went to the post office to mail off a package to Jeremy, Michele, and Evan, and because that went fairly quickly, I had time to walk to Van Vorst Park and Hamilton Square before going to PT in the pedestrian plaza. My therapist had her first vaccination this morning! She had to show her license and a pay stub to verify her status, so they're really being careful to make sure people aren't jumping the queue.

And now I'm on the introductory zoom before we start texting Georgia voters. Apparently we'll have as many as a thousand names today, so it'll be a busy evening. They're trying to text every single person in Georgia who doesn't seem to have voted yet -- 300K voters today, and another 200K tomorrow. Whew, I have 1059 names. Time to get started. That went fast, and they're pretty quiet -- and just got another 300 names. Two

people had moved, one had died, and lots of people just texted stop.

Polly said that Linda, who is enrolled in the J&J trial, was notified that when she got the first injection on December 10th, she already had SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. They were both shocked, neither one of them having been sick or having had a known exposure to the virus. They suspect that Linda may have been exposed when she played pickleball indoors, which she did until early November. The number of players was limited, but not everyone wore a mask. (They live in Seattle, where I know a few other people with covid.)

Covid Tracking: Other numbers still suspect during this holiday season; nearly 125K people in hospital.

The first case of the UK variant has been identified in the US, in Colorado, in a man with no known travel history. It could be all over the country, undetected, because we map so few samples. I guess we'll know pretty soon whether it really is more infectious, though we may not know it based on our own data.

NYT: President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. on Tuesday criticized the speed of vaccine distribution under the Trump administration and promised to step up the pace when he takes office, while offering a sobering warning about the continuing toll of the pandemic. / “As I long feared and warned, the effort to distribute and administer the vaccine is not progressing as it should,” Mr. Biden said in Wilmington, Del., adding that at the current pace, “It’s going to take years, not months, to vaccinate the American people.”

WaPo: [Florida, Ohio and Texas put elderly over essential workers for vaccine, bucking federal advice](#) / The choices reflect distinct needs in a diverse country, but they also highlight an emerging patchwork that could hinder the national effort to corral the pandemic.

The above doesn't seem to be to be our worst problem in administering vaccines just now.

338K official deaths from covid-19.



Wednesday, December 30

I was up for a while after 4 this morning; not particularly fretful, just wide awake. The only task I was chewing on was what I want for my birthday in a week, and all I could think of was how delightful it was to have a take-out meal. Surely I want more than that! I'll have to think some more.

After a while, I went back to bed and then slept late. By 9:30, all the texts from last night had been unassigned and then made available to people who want to help polish them off -- and they're all gone already! So I'm off the hook once again.

A healthy 41-year-old Republican Congressman-elect from Louisiana died of covid before he could even be sworn in. At the end of the NYT article, they report other deaths, all Republicans: "Other elected officials to die from Covid-19 include several state legislators: a Republican state senator from [Minnesota](#), [New Hampshire's](#) new Republican speaker of the House of Representatives, and in [North Dakota](#), David Dean Andahl, a Republican known as Dakota Dave, who was elected posthumously to the State House of Representatives after dying from the virus." I think Democrats may be more likely to wear their masks and avoid gathering in large groups.

[Laurie Garrett @Laurie\\_Garrett](#) Here in NYC I will likely have to wait till April or May to get a [#COVID19](#) [#vaccine](#) but I know ppl in the rich suburbs who have already been vax'ed, and aren't health workers, 1st responders, or seniors in assisted living. Unfairness emerging.

Britain approved the AstraZeneca vaccination, though I think its efficacy is only 62%.

Anthony Hopkins tweeted a little video celebrating his 45th anniversary of sobriety and encouraging others to try that path.

I went to PT, and I continue to be encouraged that I'm going to achieve some improvement in my neck, shoulders, and back through all this lovely treatment and through making ergonomic changes. Aditi said that her arm is actually less sore today, after her first SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, than it was after her annual flu shot.

I've tuned in to the end of year streaming video presentation of my favorite comedy podcast, The Bugle.

The new variant has also appeared in Southern California. Everything in the media takes it for granted that this is much more infectious, but I don't know whether the virologists I follow have been convinced yet. I see on twitter that Shane Crotty, a virologist I've heard on TWiV, has become convinced that the new variant is indeed a problem, because some evidence points to a higher viral load in people infected with it. I think that's what he said, because I don't really understand the discussion.

[Jeremiah Dobruck @jeremiahdobruck](#) LA County officials say they're averaging 150 COVID-19 deaths per day. The number of daily deaths FROM EVERY OTHER CAUSE is around 170. There are so many deaths that it's causing "a backup of dead bodies at a variety of facilities and hospitals across the county," Dr. Ghaly says.

NJ Spotlight News evening email: As of this morning, [NJ Health Commissioner Judith] Persichilli said 62,901 individuals had been vaccinated in the state.

My 7pm Hoboken women's meeting was very moving tonight. Several women had a lot going on -- a death in the family, a drink signal, general rough moods. It's a hard time of year.

Covid Tracking: Another new record number of people in hospitals; holiday effects still distorting the rest of the data.

Thursday, December 31

The last day of 2020. I just had a good morning workout session with Ken. It's gray and rainy outside. I woke up a couple of times in the night, fretting about the various things I've committed to do -- attending a GSR training at the same time I host an AA meeting for the Saturday Barrow meeting; starting to teach tai chi with Angie again soon when I haven't been practicing for the past week or so. And is it safe to continue going to PT? I hope so. Other national tensions hover in the background: Various white

supremacist organizations plan to rally in DC on January 6 (my birthday, damn them!) to protest the pro forma approval by Congress of Joe Biden's election. The vaccine rollout is very slow, due to poor planning and coordination, another abdication of responsibility by the we-hate-government Republicans led by the shambolic Trump administration. Like many people, I'm just about desperate to be vaccinated!

In the night, I took some of the stomach medication recommended to me by Dr. Barbara, my acupuncturist and naturopath, and I've been drinking a lot of fennel tea. My stomach is very unsettled, and it may be all the stresses in that first paragraph. I don't think I'm having holiday sadness any more, now that Christmas is behind us.

I knew I'd feel a bit better if I started doing tai chi rounds again, so I just did three. And I made a decision to let go of nit-picking myself and just enjoy doing them, which could be transformative for me! Actually, I'm sure I've made that decision before, but maybe I'll be able to remember it for a while longer this time.

Listening to TWiV. Vincent Racaniello is not yet convinced that the variant that emerged in the UK is more transmissible. He argues that the methods used to argue that it is are fairly new and still developing, and he can't think of other viruses that have so quickly spawned more transmissible variants. He also says that public health experts have other criteria and may have to act as though it really is more infectious.

It's nearly 10:00 on the last day of 2020. I got to play some Bloons with Evan to round out the year.

I'm worried about what might happen on January 6th, or shortly afterwards. I hope judges and governors and secretaries of state in swing states are all very cautious, because I worry that some of these armed loonies might go after them.

I've had two phone conversations today with Christine, and a long call with my AA sponsee, and I helped teach a tai chi class over zoom. A pretty sociable New Year's Eve, really!

And it's about bedtime.

Notes to self for tomorrow: look for a biology book for Evan, and send Christine a list of political groups I admire. Oh, and buy Christine a copy of "The Doorbell Rang."