

COVID-19: The Pandemic the U.S Managed to Politicize

William Fink Weinberg

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## INTRODUCTION

(intro music: Gil Scott Heron's *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*)

Its been a rough year. Running through the lists of contemporary challenges the U.S is facing would take too long.

So for the sake of brevity let's jump into COVID-19: the little virus that could. Finding a place in the hearts and lungs of millions of Americans, infecting conversations, and the national discourse. Education, Sports, Movies, Politics, all have been infected with the virus. As a country, the one thing we all can agree on is we've had enough.

Unfortunately, we just haven't figured out *how* we want to ride out the rest of this pandemic. Other countries are already safely opening themselves up again while we're over here with our unsanitized thumbs in our asses. In the spirit of America, not only has Coronavirus infected the political discourse, but politics have infected the COVID conversation.

Despite scientist's continued support for stay at home orders, masks, and testing to curb infections, Republicans at the state and national level have grown impatient of the *flatten the curve* strategy and are trying something new, open the country back up and figure it out from there. Why have 2 marshmallows tomorrow when you could have over 100,000 Americans dead today?

**MEAT**

In one corner we have scientists. They're college educated and have a liberal bias so take their lifetime of pathological research with a grain of salt. Remember, alternative facts are just as valid as the real ones.

Reports from doctors like epidemiologist Jodie Guest are in support of "wide-scale stay at home orders [...] inconsistency in implementing public health measures has [...] created substantial amounts of public confusion and fodder for social media conspiracy theories, hyperpartisanship, and distrust of experts." (Guest, 2020) Dr. Guest is saying a coordinated response from local and national leaders is vital in responsibly handling the pandemic.

This takes us to the opposite corner. Donald Trump, 45th President of the United States, and a very stable genius. Starting in April protests around the US sparked as people were getting fed up with their state's stay at home order. Trump decided to circumvent the jurisdiction of the governors of Michigan, Minnesota, and Virginia by expressing his support of the protests.

**(insert Michigan protest audio 00:35-00:45)**

This incongruity of authority was not the last time the president actively impeded efforts to alleviate infection rates, as he recently came out in favor of slowing down the US rate of testing

**(insert Trump rally)**

His argument is more testing equals more confirmed cases, and more confirmed cases would make his presidency look, I don't know, inept; we wouldn't want that. There are some on the Antifa left, like Dr. Assaf Bitton who are making radical suggestions like *more testing* (**insert Bitton clip PBS NEWSHOUR**).

This divide in American social and political life has created an environment of disunity that is dangerous when in the midst of a pandemic. As Dr. Guest mentions counties and states policies are only as effective as their weakest neighbor, as NPR's Nurith Aizenman reports (**NPR Clip**).

When states, politicians, and everyday people think they are exempt from practicing safe standards like wear masks, going out for necessities only, and participating in testing the effort that *does* go toward protecting people is jeopardized.

### **Conclusion**

There are countless justifications for not practicing safe conduct, and in the U.S the trend is those on the right feel they're civil liberties are being threatened by the cloth around their mouths

**(DW clip)**.

So where do we go from here? On both sides of the political spectrum, we are taught to tolerate and respect those we may disagree with, but what happens when our disagreements may very well kill us?

As of right now, the president and his dangerous policies have been, are, and will continue to kill hundreds of thousands of Americans. What are our options? Vote for Joe in November? By then a team of scientists from Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital, Georgia Tech, and Boston Medical Center predict as many as 500,000 Americans will be killed. Nearly 2 million if restrictions continue to lift.

Regardless of politics, personal beliefs, ethics, or philosophy, we all need to recognize the health and well being of our fellow citizens should be worth more than our desire to get a haircut.

**(outro music: Gil Scott Heron's *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*)**

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