

KHAN: Panic, Pandemonium, And The Pandemic

Sharif Khan



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If history tells us anything, the very first casualties in a crisis are often critical thinking and civility. Sadly, this is now evident in the current COVID-19 pandemic. Judging by the insufferable hoarding, overwrought histrionics, and the lack of toilet paper, it's quite reasonable to say we are fast approaching the zenith of hysterics. Our collective sense of civility is increasingly fractured and devolving into a conditional mess. That is, some are abandoning the tenets of decency and restraint if their own respective needs are not first met. Instead, they are resorting to infantile tantrums amid dystopian hubris with little to no regard for those most in need, i.e., our elderly and our infirm. Surely, we are better than this. This is simply not what we stand for as Americans.

We all need to do our part to [flatten the curve](#) with vigilance and cautious appraisal of the various factors involved in the pandemic. We also need to flatten the hysterical curve as well. Panic leads to disorder and disorder leads to chaos. Again, history provides ample proof.

It's worth noting that, aside from this very real pandemic, we are also enduring an insufferable [infodemic](#). A constant barrage of information is being thrown at us on an hourly basis. A lot of it is just hyperbole disguised as facts. As MIT recently [reported](#):

Social-media platforms [continue](#) to be a dangerous socio-technical vulnerability in times of confusion and crisis. When information is scarce, opportunities abound for media manipulators to trade on chaos and fear.

We are also reminded again that the proverbial political swamp remains as bloated as ever and has, so far, proved pretty ineffectual in this crisis. Instead, all the

insufferable political volleying back and forth these last few weeks demonstrates just how many heads in Washington remained buried in the sand or elsewhere.

Far too many in Washington insist on using the coronavirus pandemic to undermine their opposition rather than look out for the American public. Others throw caution to the wind in the hopes that this novel virus would simply flit away in the breeze. Clearly, it hasn't. So far, it has become a perfect storm of apoplectic fits and Polly Anna optimism. It's even been alleged, but not proven, that some in Washington have tried to [profit off the crisis](#).

This calculated jockeying for positioning in the political sphere is being done with little to no regard for the economy and for our jobs, never mind our public health. David Katz, the founding director of the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center wrote the following in a piece for [The New York Times](#):

I am deeply concerned that the social, economic and public health consequences of this near total meltdown of normal life – schools and businesses closed, gatherings banned – will be long lasting and calamitous, possibly graver than the direct toll of the virus itself. The stock market will bounce back in time, but many businesses never will. The unemployment, impoverishment and despair likely to result will be public health scourges of the first order.

Larry Brilliant, the epidemiologist who helped defeat smallpox, also offered some much-needed insight on the pandemic in a recent interview with [Wired](#):

Well, I'm a scientist, but I'm also a person of faith. And I can't ever look at something without asking the question of isn't there a higher power that in some way will help us to be the best version of ourselves that we could be?

All of us must simply rise to the occasion. What's necessary right now for most of us is some hard-eyed optimism alongside a deeper sense of [faith](#) and good cheer despite the current ominous outlook. We will get through this.