

VMG COVID-19 UPDATE

Thursday, June 4, 2020

Issue # 55

“So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *the Great Gatsby*

This is our tendency; over and over. We get activated, make progress, and then when we lose focus or “return to normal,” we lose that progress. This may be true of how we are dealing with the virus (see below) and it may also be true of how our outrage, concern, and commitment to make change about social injustice, racism, and inequality could get lost and be “borne back ceaselessly into the past.” And we have quite a past. This is our work now as part of our society: for both the pandemic and for social and racial justice. It’s all our responsibility to move forward and continue to move forward.

And again, there are continued signs of hope. “It’s a broken window, it’s not a life.” This is a headline in today’s *Boston Globe*. It’s a statement from a woman who owns a liquor store that was vandalized during the events of Sunday evening in Boston. Here’s how she described what happened (from the *Globe* story by Janelle Nanos):

“When the text message about the looting came, Hadley Douglas, who is white, stayed home with their kids while TJ, who is Black, drove from their home to the South End to check on the store. Then her phone rang: Someone had tripped the store’s alarm, and the representative from the security company needed a password to turn it off. Her mind went blank — they usually called TJ first — and the dispatcher told her she would have to call the police.

“You can’t call the police,” she sobbed. Her husband, she explained, “is Black and in a broken-into liquor store the night after protesting and rioting. I need you to hear me when I say you can’t send the police,” she told the dispatcher. “If you call them, you have to understand what you’re condemning him to.”

The dispatcher was sobbing, too — she was torn, and had to do her job — when suddenly the alarm stopped.

TJ had arrived at the store and typed in the security code to disarm it. But the moment underscored the importance of the protests, Hadley says. And it helped inspire the message that she posted to social media that morning. “[W]e don’t have lives. Dreams deferred cause rage. Our window is broken but the roots of this are in 400 years of knees on necks.”

The message resounded with Urban Grape’s customers, who responded on Tuesday with the store’s single highest day of sales in its 10-year history. It was one of several area businesses which, despite experiencing theft and damage during the protest’s aftermath, chose to use the moment to help amplify the message of the Black Lives Matter movement.”

So that we try not to let the current carry us back into the past, here are some resources sent to me by John Novo this morning:

75 things white people can do for racial justice:

<https://link.zixcentral.com/u/89dfaa2a/gmTOnHqm6hGz-pWgUabuwQ?u=https%3A%2F%2Fmedium.com%2Fequality-includes-you%2Fwhat-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234>

Podcast By Malcolm Gladwell - I would also highly recommend his book *Talking to Strangers*:

<https://link.zixcentral.com/u/05a6cbbb/OuDRnHqm6hGz-pWgUabuwQ?u=http%3A%2F%2Frevisionisthistory.com%2Fepisodes%2F13-miss-buchanans-period-of-adjustment>

National, State and Regional

Let's start with international, actually. An epidemiologist in Sweden issue an apology for championing the "herd immunity" approach to dealing with the virus. You may know that Sweden was among the most lax governments in ordering social distancing (very little) and protective measures. It appeared for a while that it was working but in the last few days, there are indications that Sweden's mortality rate is higher than its neighbors. A useful experiment, perhaps, but not a very good result. Elsewhere in the world, the virus is now spreading rapidly in Latin America, South America and the Middle East.

In the U.S., the number of confirmed cases is rising but this may be partially the result of increased testing. Another indication of how social policy can affect disease conditions, the number of testing sites available is lower in minority communities.

And while testing capacity is up, there are reports that not enough people are seeking testing. Maybe this is the result of anxiety, transportation and other issues, and maybe the result of the economic and social turmoil of late.

ER visits across the country have plunged but are now coming back slowly. This is almost certainly due to people being wary of going to the ER and getting exposed and the social restrictions on the ER use (no companions or visitors in places).

Another study confirms that Hydroxychloroquine is not effective at preventing COVID-19.

And finally, while time has gone by and social unrest has increased and the weather has gotten better and who knows what other factors are at work, there are places that were vigilant before that seem less so now. The virus is still there. Let's not get "borne back into the past." Stay vigilant.

At VMG

From Gina:

- AMC "Outdoor Office" tent in place as well as new tented space for lab draws; both behind the center.
- Pediatric visits for children 0-2 years of age proceeding well in EHC and GHC.

- It's important for all services to work closely in each health center to discuss patient care and those entering the center to maximize social distancing upon entering the health center.

That's the update today.

- Please wash your hands (often),
- Don't touch your face,
- Maintain social/physical distancing (it works),
- Definitely wear a mask (it is not a political statement; it's a public health good),
- Continue to be in touch with and take care of each other, and help to educate everyone

Be well,

Joel

Be patient; be mindful

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