

# make me wanna holler, issue 2: art in the age of corona



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## hello everyone,

First and foremost, we hope everyone is safe, sound, and healthy during this unprecedented moment in time.

Never in our wildest thoughts and dreams did we expect the world to shut down. The Black Rock Coalition was in midst of preparing and finalizing plans to celebrate our 35th Anniversary. But COVID-19 took precedence over our—and the world's—2020 plans.

As the sum of all fears became reality, the numbers of those infected grew. And sadly, the casualties became more than any of us could bear, we tried to find a starting point to connect to you. To convey what we were all feeling, experiencing, try to make sense of it, and hopefully, start to ask ourselves—and each other—what 'the new normal' will be and what, if any, role, we will have in it.

The first edition of 'Make Me Wanna Holler' dealt with the anger and frustration that we people, who are darker than blue, had to wrestle and navigate through in the wake of a series of high profile deaths of black men and women when confronted by police. It also addressed how the criminal just-us system seemed to, in cruel irony, turn a blind eye, the glaring obvious be dammed.

This issue of 'Make Me Wanna Holler' features cross section of some of our favorite people within the Black Rock community speaking from the head and the heart about how they are dealing with life on a global pause.

The Black Rock Coalition dedicates this to the memories of Manu Dibango, Wallace Roney, Henry Grimes, Richie Johnson, Ellis Marsalis, Lee Konitz, John Prine, and all those we have lost to the Corona Virus. We also extend our deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies to their respective families and friends.

We also express our gratitude and appreciation to all of the doctors, nurses, EMTs and all health care personnel who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to treat those diagnosed with this terrible affliction.

Big up to all of our essential workers holding it down so the rest of us can maintain some sense of sanity.

Stay safe everyone.

Earl Douglas  
Executive Director  
Black Rock Coalition

## IN SEPARATE LOCATIONS, OF ONE MIND...

...this land of the lost and found has caused a global brain freeze.

Across the planet, being frozen in place is no friendly game of “Red Light, Green Light, 1-2-3.” The loss of freedom, to gather, rip, run, and play, has immobilized millions while ambitious musicians are forced to abandon the stage—the only true safe haven that many of us have ever known. The freedom to create, emulate, liberate and eradicate our darkest demons into soulful truths of passion embedded in every bar, every note, and every syllable. The loss of loved ones near and far, where the omnipresence of death is the hidden new normal. No final last touch or comforting goodbye. No strength in numbers as another prepares to die.

Friends, Romans, Countrymen—lend me your fear and I’ll 86 that shit. Now is not the time, for even the strong can’t survive. While pompous political pimps are playing the God Game, not ready for prime time players are playing Russian Roulette on the front lines, never knowing if a COVID laced bullet is nestled in the next cough, sneeze or breeze. These first responders, the heartbeat of America, as well as the members of the righteous underground, the true front liners that keep food on our shelves and serve knowledge to our children’s minds, all deserve our recognition and gratitude.

We are bearing witness to this carnivorous plague in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Twenty as it devours so many of the Earth’s Souls in biblical proportions. There was no warning to paint a cross in lamb’s blood on the two door post of the upper door, no swarm of locusts or massive rain storm. No arc nor exodus. Just the profound reality of COVID-19 Coronavirus from sea to shining sea.

What has been found is the fighter deep inside one’s spirit. What has been found is that untapped “will to survive” and not “merely exist” attitude that appears to have been lying dormant in a fossilized soul. Shift after exhausting shift, night after sleepless night, day after every isolated day, conviction and restriction is needed as we strive to remain alive.

Acceptance and abandonment, a dual causality of refusal to succumb to the death angel’s wishes. 6 feet apart instead of 6 feet under, one helluva cause and effect.

As a conforming nonconformist, I have obeyed and adhered to the rules set in play. I wash hands, wear masks, even bathe and sanitize deliveries and groceries. I also feel a plethora of songs brewing inside the catacombs of my mind as I scribe. Honestly, this exercise of personal truths has forced me to look deeper into the looking glass. With the Power of the Mind’s Eye, I will



not turn a blind eye to the “facts versus falsehoods” epidemic that has infested Pennsylvania Avenue. Political hackery, spewing salvos more dangerous than any C-19/RonaV pandemic, will still be peeking around the corner on the other side of this, leaving a crumbled country in its wake. These fatuous people have endangered us all. Plain and simple: we need FACTS OVER FEAR.

As I watch the criminal empire of trump, inc. continue to fleece America’s coffers with a vintage “in yo’face” gangsterism, the body count mathematics increases hourly across these Divided States. No epiphany needed. I realize an end, a genocide, a death beyond death...a DEATH of DEMOCRACY.

Thank you for this moment in your mind.

—Kumasi  
Thought Provocateur  
D-XTREME  
FUNQUEARIUM1  
DARQUESTONE SYNDICATE



# Gateway to the Universe

© Brian Tate  
March 11, 2020



Had a few laughs with Vernon before the set. This was only days before the Coronavirus landed on New York City like a lead boot. Earlier that evening I had enjoyed a solitary dinner at a half-empty restaurant in Chinatown. I had gone down there to show my solidarity with people who were being targeted by a volley of hatemongering. Once the meal was done, I walked twelve blocks and hopped a train to Midtown. The Coronavirus was in the news but it was mostly guesses and what-ifs at that point. Still, everywhere I went, amidst the plentiful talking, laughing, eating, and drinking on Manhattan at night, I had the sense of people waiting for a shoe to drop. Of course, none of us knew how impossibly hard that impact would be.



The Iridium contained a very small crowd, mostly congregated at tables by the front. I had steered between them to lean against the rim of the stage. Vernon was pleasantly startled to see me and that felt good.

Vernon fiddled with an array of brightly colored pedals, each a gateway to the universe. By then we had gotten caught up on our usual repertoire of topics and a few others besides. Including my curiosity about the night's headliner. After awhile Vernon pointed to the other side of the room. "Yeah, the Mountain Man's right over there."

I followed his eyes. Then I found myself wandering up a short flight of steps and past a row of empty supper tables to a back corner where Otis Taylor sat bent over a plate of food.

*Mr. Taylor. Don't mean to intrude. Just wanted to tell you that Vernon told me he was hitting with you tonight and I thought I'd come through. Picked up your record yesterday and it's a knockout.*

He looked me over. *Yeah? Which record?*

*The latest one, with that song 12-String Mile.*

*Yeah, he said. That would be Fantasizing About Being Black.*

I just nodded, taking in his presence. Mystical. Bottomless. Couldn't quite pin it down.

He scraped a fork across his plate, gave me another look. *You a musician?*

*Yes sir, a vocalist. In a band.*

*Uh huh. What kind of music? You look kinda...What is it, soul? Punk?*

*Yeah, I said. That.*

We laughed. Then he said: *What's the name of the band?*

Told him. He straightened up in his seat and his eyes said, *Oh shit.*

Twenty minutes later they were on stage, ripping it up. An electrifying set.

Later, as I was leaving, Vernon mentioned the conversation on zombie films we were scheduled to give at BAM in a few weeks. The club around us was emptying out. He said, *"You know, our talk has written itself."* I raised an eyebrow. *"The virus,"* he said. *"If this isn't straight up Romero-land, I don't know what is."*

We bumped fists. Still considered safe back then.





# Apocalypse, music for the

by Kamara Thomas

The breeze came slow  
The birds just sang  
As the granite roads  
Swayed underneath

▼

A great beast bowed down  
Machine limbs splayed, unfurled  
Breeze came slow  
Oh quiet world

▼

Spring unfolding  
Earthquake beneath us  
Burrowing lenders  
A bursting redbud

▼

I was sitting at the crossroads  
Twirling my thumbs  
As the world come down

▼

Just watching it fade  
And the band played on  
As the world come down

▼

Is there anything safe  
Anything to save  
As the world come down

▼

Should I forget my name  
Not fade away  
As the world come down

▼

Do I hold my baby  
Fold my hands  
Take my stand  
As the world come down

▼

Half-moon through the fog  
Seems like an omen  
Voices in our heads  
All from the past

▼

Don't it all seem like  
some half-baked  
TV movie  
Apocalyptic

## I RELEASED AN ANTIDOTE. HERE'S HOW, WHEN & WHY:

Kelsey Warren

The night of March 11, I was en route back to NYC via Barcelona after finishing a short European tour. As the plane was landing and the phone signal returned, I received a dozen texts. This was my first one.

*Maya: Kelsey! When are you flying back?  
Did you just watch the president's address?*

*Kelsey: Just landed from Barcelona. Nah. I try not to watch that idiot. What did I miss?*

*Maya: They're banning all flights from Europe for the next 30 days  
When are you supposed to come back?*

*Me: I'm getting bombarded with texts. I literally just landed at JFK. I'm here*

*Maya: OMG. Thank God*

Earlier, March 3, I arrived at Laguardia to a nearly empty airport heading to Paris. I never went through security so quickly in my life. This was such a stress-free travel situation. While in France, we were aware of the virus but it didn't seem serious yet. Days later in London, the danger became more obvious and the atmosphere started to shift. Still, daily life was continuing as usual, I played a packed show at The Troubadour with amazing bands and had an excellent night. Little did I know this would be my last big show for a long time.

March 11

*Craig: Text or call mom ASAP. She's very concerned about you getting home with all that's going on.*

*Kelsey: Already did. I'm fine*

*Craig: My Man! Thank u.*

March 12 in NYC, I'm waiting in long lines to buy food and scrambling to find toilet paper which was nowhere to be found. Just like that, all my shows, studio production and session work were cancelled. My packed calendar for the month of March was now completely empty.

A few years ago, I was recording for Blak Emoji and other projects. I produced a lot of instrumental tracks that in my opinion sounded more like something off an ambient NIN or Radiohead album, RZA or Dilla outtakes, a Flying Lotus release, or a television/movie score. A friend and collaborator Jasin Cadic suggested I put together an album of this type of sound. So now with all my work stripped away, I decided to go full throttle into recording this predominantly instrumental electronic album. It wasn't the initial plan but throwing myself into creative work became the most therapeutic thing to do.

Long story short, I had a blast isolating while making this album that became appropriately titled, ANTIDOTE. I did what I wanted and made the music I wanted with no distractions or stress of



deadlines. I also didn't really feel like singing much. Four of the ten songs were those older instrumentals I had never finished, and the other six were new songs composed starting March 10 until the album dropped on March 19th. After ANTIDOTE'S release, I was slammed with promotion and other music projects surprisingly.

This may sound weird but I've been having a good time during the lockdown. I'm very lucky to be healthy, happy, staying home and getting to do what I like.

Then there's the serious downside that reminds you this shit is real.

March 20:

Dustin: *Hey beauty! Oh 2A is stupid. I just haven't followed up on it. How are you right now?*

Kelsey: *Hey there. I was heading to London. I hope you're hanging in there during this crazy thing. Stay safe Dustin.*

Dustin: *Thank u so much love bug. U too.*

Approximately a week later, Dustin passed away from COVID-19 complications. My first Zoom experience was supposed to be a virtual memorial service for Dustin. In the end, I couldn't do it.

Is this what life is going to be like for us? Then, there it was—a bunch of my friends were losing people to the virus. When Adam Schelsinger from the band Fountains Of Wayne passed, it was a

shocker because it smashed the whole media thing that the virus will only affect older people and those in poor health. Also, at first it seemed Black and Latinx people were not as affected, but that changed rapidly. So, what do you do to mentally get through all of this?

Well, we know the basics, stay inside as much as possible, only go out for essentials, practice social distancing, wear masks, wash your hands, etc. It's a shame that people in certain states in America are still calling this a hoax: protesting by staying out all day with their picket signs sans masks, not social distancing, so they can fight for the right to go to the mall. These actions put other people in danger and prolong the country from getting back to normal. I mention this because it adds to the stress and anxiety of this pandemic we're already dealing with. I wish people had that same enthusiasm when a brother was taking a knee years ago protesting Black people unjustifiably getting murdered but again, another story.

So being asked to stay indoors doesn't mean you are in prison mentally or physically. As we are currently witnessing, life is fragile. You must LIVE more now than ever!

It's like this: I'm not a rich man and of course, many of us are currently experiencing financial insecurity. However, I know I have a LOT in life. I am humble and thankful for all that I have and for what I get to do in life. There will always be someone who has more than you. And you will always have more than someone else. But do you have some measure of happiness and do you appreciate it?

What makes you smile or puts light in your heart or attitude?

With so much that has been taken away from us, this moment allows us to see what's really important and how much we really do have. This time last year, I might have been singing a different song. I'm thankful for being in a better place of gratitude and happiness, even during one of the darkest times in history. I'm safe, making music, eating, binge watching internet stuff, talking to/texting or FaceTiming friends on the phone, watching movies and laughing my ass off with my daughter and...eating. Did I mention eating? Exercising too. I'm glad I have the privilege of making and listening to music which brings me some sanity. Don't get me wrong, when the restaurants, lounges and travel opens up again....you can bet I'm taking advantage of that HARD!! Until then, I'm enjoying all life's other gifts presently available. As you can see, tomorrow is never promised so try and have some fun today. As for myself, expect more music coming at ya, for fun, entertainment and therapy.



**from:** Meshell

Firstly, thank you for asking me.

I am worried about my livelihood, of course, but touring was becoming a physical hardship. It was hard for me to justify the carbon footprint and take responsibility as a human on earth. I am saddened by the abrupt shift in my inability to experience other cultures through my travel as a musician. As a person of color, travel has aided me in my emotional and psychological survival.

I am not a tech wiz, nor am I someone who can bridge a divide via email or text. I am struggling a bit with friendships, but I always have in regards to communication. I am enjoying the mind-space of this moment; I can listen to music and read.

Do I stay on the 'gram? Sadly, yes. I am dialoguing with my self, asking why? This I wonder, as I am not a great PR-SELF-PROMOTING-SELFIE-TAKER. When I do post, I am always shocked by what folks respond to. But like many technological moments throughout time, some of us will thrive and others will fall aside. It has always been this way.

I don't believe I have ever enjoyed the tiny screen as a way to experience sound. Sadly, I fear I may be heading towards the path of obsolescence, but who knows what can be found within my self-governed mind-space.

## closing in... by LaRonda Davis

I live across from an ER.

From my window, I've heard the 7p cheers for healthcare workers and the all-hours anguish of people whose tomorrows will ever be absent a mother, father, nana, papi, wife, husband, partner, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, cousin, or friend.

Because, in New York, our neighbor's joys, pains, and struggles are never more than 6 feet away.

We're symbiotic strangers living on the edge of each's other's peripheral oblivion.

Easier to ignore in the hustle and bustle of normal life.

But this is *not* normal life.

The chatter is quieted. Distractions diffused. Energies isolated.

Humanity streamed.

We're closed off, but our empathies are wide open.

And those of us who are used to communing through the shared-space spirituality of music—the in-the-moment mutual exchange of art—find ourselves trying to be okay with replacing physical immersion with digitized, distant devotion.

*Trying.*

There's no doubt the world will sound different when we reemerge. Maybe we'll still hear the cheers...and the wails.

Or maybe they'll fade away.

But I want to believe that music will still find a way to do what it's always done—

help bring us closer together.

Even if we're far apart.

## Quick Reflections on the state of lockdown

April 24th, 2020

by Melvin Gibbs

It seems obvious that systemic change is needed in America. SARS-CoV 2 has made the lack of resilience of our way of life manifestly clear. A few days ago traders were paying people to take oil. The international lockdown triggered by COVID19 made possession of what is usually considered one of the world's most important commodities a liability. The lockdown has also exposed an ironic fact about the American way of business. It is now common knowledge that many major U. S .corporations operate like people living in the projects operate, transacting in "survival mode," existing without significant cash reserves, dependent on weekly or biweekly injections of income.

Governmental interventions in response to COVID-19 have also manifested an interesting irony. These interventions have clearly shown the practical utility of things like universal basic income and universal healthcare.

Additionally, the halting governmental response to the pandemic because of a businessman's lack of trust in science and the massive number of lives lost because of a strategy that was a combination of magical thinking, hubris, and greed is a clear illustration of everything that's wrong with the American approach to climate change.

The big question is When? When is change gonna come?



I'm reminded of that moment in time when that mass of African-American soldiers returned to the U.S. from France at the end of World War I. It was obvious then that things needed to change. It was clear back then that America would not be able to sustain the political conditions that those soldiers lived under. Nonetheless, it took 50 years for that change to actually happen.

Will this moment evolve the way that moment did? Will America attempt to "go back to business" and proceed to try to put things back the way they were?

Or will America move towards grappling with the implementation of the societal changes that this pandemic has illustrated are clearly necessary?

Time will tell.



## what's up BRC FAM,

So you want to know how I'm coping with the quarantine? It really does make me wanna holler, throw up both my hands!

At first, I really didn't take the pandemic seriously. I thought it was just more media hype, until I had to postpone not only one but two music video productions. I couldn't schedule anymore clients and my band and we couldn't get together to practice either.

I work from home anyway but not having any clients and being able to go out, etc., started making me feel trapped. It brought on feelings of anxiety and panic, which I thought I had under control. Unfortunately, being quarantined finally got the best of me and against better judgement, I had to go to a friend's house for a few days.

So far, I don't know anyone personally who has contracted the virus and quite frankly I'm glad. But I'll really be glad when things get back to some kind of normal, if there's still such a thing.

Until then, let's try to be our creative selves, writing the songs our fans will love. The world is counting on us musicians to ease their troubled minds.

See you guys on the other side.

Malxolm Brixkhous

# where's my toilet paper & revolution?!

An excerpt from the brain of the lyrically insane.

I, like the many honorable niggas before me, are caught between existing and dreaming: of scheming of a fuller existence but also tryna look out for me and mine, ya know? I am caught between fanning the flames of conspiracy theories and trying to organize my people (through music, convo + community) to take strategic action against the motherfuckers who legit cause us harm. As a musical project, we occupy an interesting in between. Here's what that looks like right now...

*[internal dialogue]*

— Will workers who are paid the least go on a general strike and bring this imperialist, fucked up ass capitalist country to its crusty, dusty, white supremacist knees?

— This cotton mask aint finna do shit. Where can I get me a N95?

— Will the U.S. finally admit that the most important workers are those paid the least?

— Why TF y'all hoarding toilet paper?

— Will republicans admit that their stimulus checks and relief packages are socialism coming in to save a dying, crony capitalist state that will eat itself and us along with it?

— Fuck this zoom video shit, bruh. I miss y'all.

— I wonder about "the last straw"

— not what will be the last straw but what will the last straw produce. When the collective of us is unemployed, disregarded, robbed of dignity and respect, robbed of home and peace...what happens next?

...I don't have all or any answers really. But I continue to put my trust and love in the people: my people. Who have survived, thrived, soul trained and lead nations out of whiteness and into Blackness. My answer is trust the people and rock the fuck on.

— QADR, **The Muslims**

*[What's giving me peace and keeping me busy besides work: making music, patches, planting seeds and washing more dishes than I've ever washed. Missing all my people and hoping they're wearing masks and washing their fucking hands. Forever ready to take these gummies down and rebuild a world we deserve.]*

**from:** Leron Thomas (Pan Amsterdam)

One of the things that I have noticed during this period is that I feel the need to make more Art. The urge is stronger than before. You go online and you see the narrative fed you and the counter narrative fighting for your consideration, and it feels like a big bunch of "Good Cop, Bad Cop" scenarios that fight for your attention and submission. With those narratives, I feel a strong opposing polarity that wants to feel expressive and relevant from within.

I watch people do tons of live vids on Instagram. I find myself accidentally thinking that I have a notification, but really it's somebody started a live video and I just joined when I clicked on it. So I try to immediately jump off before they see that I've joined. So that experience happening a few times a day turned me off to trying to express in that way. Plus it feels too fleeting in nature; "here one minute, gone the next." Dismissive.

I've gone back to editing found footage for my past and present musical works. I've put out 6 vids so far and there's one thing I've noticed. It's very fulfilling. Also dialogue gets created. Some dude that claimed to be my number one fan jumped on my fan page and was vexed by a video I made. He even wrote "Nobody's gonna

listen to it." I've never had a reaction like that before to anything that I've posted. And I felt his anger because that's the kind of anger I sometimes harvest when I see the bs that mainstream deems as art. Meanwhile, others who, in my opinion make true art, struggle and are overlooked as merely hopeless romantic losers. Even the manager, label manager or A&R of an artist is considered the new "rockstar", while the artists themselves are considered a sucker. And are treated as such.

But now with the mainstream fast-food music machine at a halt 🤔 and no tour support, music of a peculiar nature can cut through the white noise. So my advice is this, 'artists, keep your endurance about you and do whatever you can to get your shit to the people right now because this is your time to cut through the white noise.'





## PRAY FOR PEACE

written by Tom Hammer and Sandra St. Victor  
*From upcoming The Family Stand release, "Evolve"*

*(partial lyrics)*

Find yourself a side of quiet  
Level up with indigo and violet  
and pray, pray  
Like your life depended on it  
Pray. Pray for peace  
pray pray pray ....

Pray for peace...

#RESIST

[See The Making of: Pray For Peace, an art film  
at [youtu.be/cdVlb\\_B1yMU](https://youtu.be/cdVlb_B1yMU) ]

Sandra St. Victor

one of the most important and interesting things that an OG (which I guess I would be these days 🤔) ever said to me was, "Jeff! If you live long enough, you get to see almost everything bruh" and that means the good, the bad, and everything in between. The real part of life's journey is that there are good and bad things that will surely always happen! And, in my humble opinion, anyone that does not understand this fact simply hasn't learned anything yet.

As I evolve, approaching my senior citizen status, the things that I find myself focusing on more and making a priority are the things that are really important. This is a very unique time the world finds itself in at this very moment but then I hear my people say 'Hold On! Hold On!'

One of the real perks of getting older is the realization that you have less time ahead of you than you had behind. I am really and truly thankful and grateful for my life, my health, my family, my friends (and shout out to my enemies too 'cause I learned a lot from them as well. LOL) All I really want to do from here on out is to continue to be positive and do the one thing that I really love and have been blessed to do really well so that I can pay it forward and be a blessing in someone's life. Be healthy and safe my people.

One love

V. Jeff 2020

Peter Lord Moreland's thoughts for  
MAKE ME WANNABE HOLLER

Perhaps the self-imposed "artist bubble" I often find myself in has provided me with a blessing to cope with the challenge of "isolation" in the midst of this pandemic. But the fear and worry in the back of my mind for loved ones remains.

Worry, however, is a pretty useless emotion unless that worry produces action. And that action can even take place in the form of spreading as much common sense as possible in dealing with preventative steps to curtail the spread of the virus.

The "gift" or the "present" of being present in this moment is to seek out the clarity this time can truly provide. The things that are truly important have the opportunity to become far more clear. How we all choose to move forward in our lives from here on out can now be attacked with a greater sense of urgency. The challenge should provide inspiration to us all.

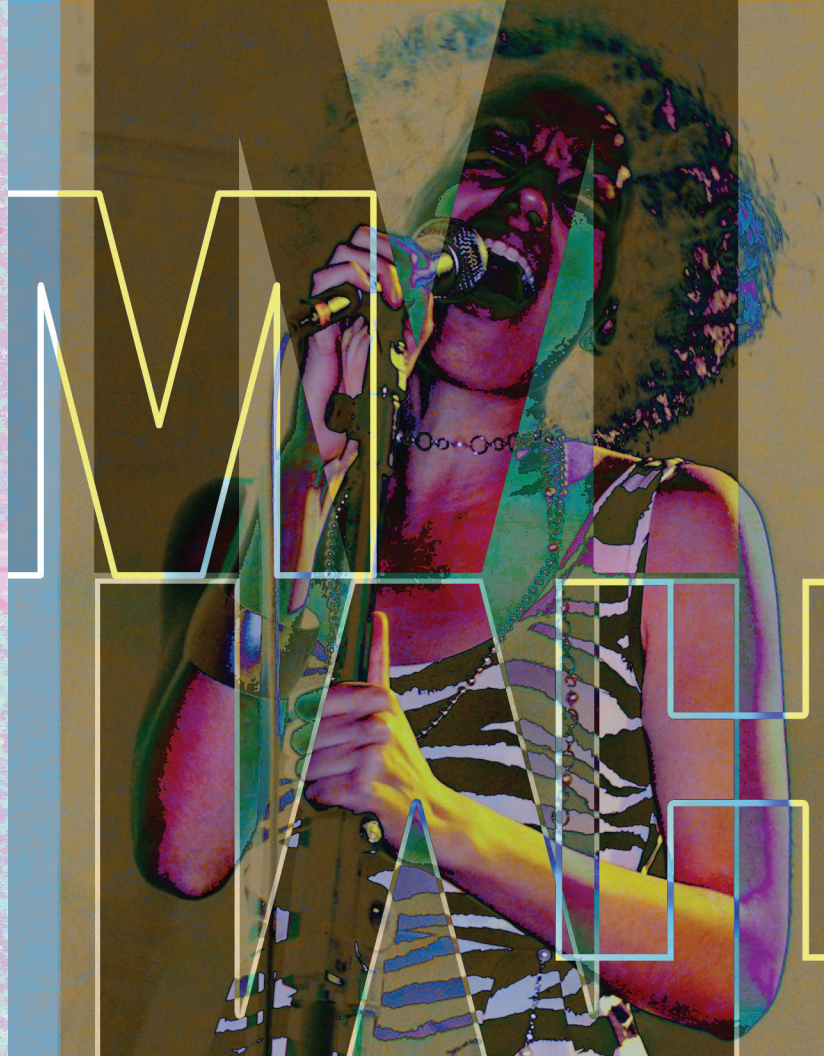
The nature of human beings, unfortunately, is to learn the hard way. The Earth, our spirits, our bodies, have been in need of a cleansing. No one would choose for that cleansing to take place in the form of a deadly pandemic, but here it is... so what are we to do with this "present?"



# things that feel good lately

by  
Leah King

Yoga/stretching  
Watching movies  
Watching comedy  
Listening to podcasts  
Going for walks  
Coloring in the "adult" coloring book  
Cleaning up  
Organizing something will probably feel good?  
Taking care of my plants  
Hanging on the balcony and texting homies  
My morning coffee routine  
Sleeping late  
Dancing to DJ sets online  
Talking to my cousins  
Catching up with old friends  
Thinking about my art after lockdown  
Reading a good book  
Resting  
Resting  
Resting  
Not feeling like I have to "do" anything  
Allowing the nothingness to come  
Sitting with my open mind  
Saying fuck you to productivity culture  
Remembering why I love music to begin with  
Feeling THAT bass  
Singing THAT trill  
Watching THAT live Prince youtube  
Moving my booty  
Giggling  
Settling into self-love  
Breathing deep  
Abandoning ego and expectation.





# COVID JOURNAL : Transmissions From An Eyewitness

by Darrell M. McNeill

March 20, 2020

This is how it all starts. When you're most distracted, most stressed and feeling most powerless...

Then just when you start reacting to symptoms rather than actual root causes, they slip those two words that are supposed to make you feel okay with it all...

"New normal..."

And you surrender just that much more of your freedom and sanity for what's being sold as safety and security...

Nah, miss me with that...

"New normals" are tantamount to the same ol' bullshit, just next level... And it's always the people with the least to lose demanded to sacrifice the most...

There ain't a damn thing normal about these times we're living in. There certainly ain't a damn thing normal about the crisis we're attempting to navigate. And there ain't shit normal about the so-called stewards who deign to lead us through said crisis...

And "normalcy" and this pestilence occupying the office of President of the United States don't exist in the same universe. "Normal" and his name should never be uttered in the same lexicon...

Acquiescing to so-called "new normals" dissolves that much more institutional memory as to what constitutes "normalcy."

New normal for who? What's the criterion for this "normal?" And what's the curve gradient for who has to give up what, for how long and how much?

We're already seeing how members of the entrenched, privileged and entitled classes in seats of power have been gaming the system to protect wealth, access and status. They didn't even have the decency to be discreet about it...

Or at least say, "God Bless you" when you sneezed...

It may be normal, but it damn sure ain't new, no matter how they try to spin it...

"New normals" are what got us here, to this angst-ridden, insecure, ignorant-ass, hate-adjacent place...

I'm a New Yorker. And as with all of my fellow New Yorkers, we've seen and been through shit. Enough shit to know NOT to surrender to "new normals." There's only "this bullshit I've gotta deal with now until I can get BACK to normal."

"New normal," my Black ass...

Miss me with that...

I refute the “new normal.” I reject the “new normal.” I resist the “new normal.” I revolt, with every fiber of my being, against the “new normal.”

I refuse to allow this bullshit in any way to become “normalized.”

This is just the new bullshit I’m dealing with now until I can get BACK to normal...

“New normals” can kick rocks...

**April 1, 2020**

Processing...

In the past couple of weeks, several people in this music field have been directly affected by this COVID-19 epidemic, a few I knew personally or was acquainted with—Richie Johnson (R.I.P.), Sandy Alderson (R.I.P.) and Wallace Roney (R.I.P.)—and others, like John Prine, Terrence McNulty, Ellis Marsalis and Adam Schlesinger, whose work I’ve long admired. Not since September 11, 2001 has “ripped from today’s headlines” taken on such a direct and personal turn...

There’s been so much talk these past few weeks: The exalting of first responders—medical workers, police, firefighters, grocers, deliverymen, construction workers, factory workers—and rightly so. The increasing demand to open up America for business, with millions cracking against the strain of economic collapse (too many to the point of catastrophic recklessness steered by

avarice)...

I hope that when whatever counts for “normalcy,” there will finally be a reckoning for the arts, those of us who empty our hearts to feed souls, lift spirits and keep it together during this agitating period...

My condolences to my extended family of New York City musicians. I hope you are all holding each other in strength, even as the world and the fates seem to conspire against us...

Still...

Processing...

**April 9, 2020**

I called “bullshit” the day they announced bandanas were acceptable as masks to help stifle the spread of COVID-19. I said to whoever would listen, “Yeah, that’s cool for White people, but can you picture how that shit’s gonna go down for Blacks and Latinos out here? As much law and law enforcement have SPECIFICALLY drilled down that they are LAYING for us behind this?”

These blithe doctrines are emblematic of standard issue White folk default cultural obliviousness of a stopgap measure that, disseminated across racial lines, yield decidedly variable outcomes and present the potential for as much (if not more) danger as the disease it was intended to abate...

At the risk of sounding paranoid (or just plain Black), it just feels like the three-dimensional chess version of ‘The Purge,’ with only half-subtle subtext...

It's nice to project hopeful altruism, but the reality is, this is STILL America, and in America, kindness and charity lie side-by-side with contempt and stupidity. And crisis brings out BOTH aspects... At their heights...

Global pandemic or no global pandemic, racism is still gon' racism...

Like Plug One poignantly inferred, "a meteor has more rights than my people..."

**April 16, 2020**

Can we knock off the dumb shit, please...?

We are NOT ALL in this together... We will not GET through this together...

As we've seen historically, time and time again, a substantial number of "us" are entirely in it for themselves... At YOUR and MY expense...

Tens of thousands of us are being sacrificed with each passing day—with tens of thousands more to follow—for the benefit of delusional Cro-Mags, corporate profiteers, entrenched government officials, and inconvenienced Yuppies missing out on their Michelin five-stars, Merlots and spa days...

I've seen my home, my city, have its body count eclipse the September 11 attacks four times over...

I've witnessed Black and Latino people and other disenfranchised

communities tossed into the pandemic fire like kindling, service workers deemed "essential" for the economy, but more useful to this nation's power brokers for their "non-essential" humanity...

A dozen friends and colleagues I know personally have died from this disease. Several dozens times that number were friends and colleagues of other friends and colleagues. I've lost count of how many artists whose work I've admired my whole life have been wiped out in the last few weeks. To say nothing of dozens of folks I know who've contracted the disease and were lucky enough to survive...

Countless people are now starting to see what it is to live hand-to-mouth, day-to-day, exposed to the rawest, most vicious elements of society...

Many, if not most, of us have been used to it for generations. Others who have spent their lives insulated by the veneer of privilege and caste superiority are losing the entirety of their disgusting minds and will stampede over their own grandmothers and grandfathers to reassert the "natural order of things." Snake-oil selling politicians and uber-capitalists sneer over OTHER PEOPLE'S LIFE SACRIFICES and crow over the "good it will do the economy"...

And the Pendejo-In-Chief who put all of us in this same trick bag is peacocking because he FINALLY has his name on a check that won't bounce...

I'm not completely cynical. I know there are people of good will left. I know the commitment and sacrifice of the thousands on the front lines...

God Bless you all. I will ally myself with you every single time, in

word, spirit and deed...

But I refuse to be naive about the avarice of SO GODDAMN MANY of my so-called countrymen. No amount of beatitudes, warm blankets, hot chocolate, warm fuzzies and “Kumbaya” will cover their acrid stench...

I will fight to the death and align with the best people being their best for everybody's sake...

But I'm NOT going to kid myself...

I don't have the luxury. NONE of us do...

We are NOT ALL in this together... We will not GET through this together...

Can we knock off the dumb shit, please...?

**APRIL 25, 2020**

“We're living in unprecedented times...”

No, we're not. Not by any stretch of the Black imagination...

“We're living in unprecedented times” is the mind-numbing, ceaseless refrain of privileged, protected classes who are oblivious to history and willfully ignorant to human experience outside or on the fringes of their default parameters or perceptions.

This pandemic is showing—in full relief, in real time and with brutal tactility—the intractability of this nation's covenant between its haves and have-nots...

A contract drafted by its ruling class with co-signatures coerced at the end of a gun...

People of color dying disproportionate to their numbers, not simply because of “underlying health conditions,” but because they occupy the most vulnerable spaces in society--the chum sacrificed to fend off other predators. Whether they be service workers in the public sector or migrant workers at the lowest end of the food distribution chain or menials maintaining that nation's most basic apparatus and infrastructure--the glue that does the thankless job of keeping this country, if not together, then at least not careening into total collapse and anarchy...

All to appease our so-called countrymen--ranging from indifference to deranged--who place their interests paramount to all in some warped sense of entitlement under the corrupted veneer of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”...

This is nothing new. Black people have been dealing this for centuries. There's been scant, if any, evolution towards race/class/gender neutral egalitarianism. The cultural hegemony of the ruling class has only calcified as technology has improved—the blood currency of colonial laissez-faire capitalism.

It bears repeating, the significance of COVID-19 is the revelation of the logical evolution of supremacist ideology no longer needing a uniform, a badge, hoods, robes, anonymity nor even strength in numbers to hide behind in order to exterminate Black people with impunity. From roadside restaurants to churches to gas stations to college campuses—and, yes, even pandemics—anyone can be randomly selected for That Rodney King Life... And then some...



This is nothing new. We've seen it all before.

"We're living in unprecedented times..."

No, we're not. Not by any stretch of the Black imagination...

As James Baldwin (Rest In Power) so astutely analyzed decades ago comparing the American North to the American South, "the only difference is the WAY they castrate you. What still remains is FACT of the castration, the actual fact..."

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose...

**EVEN AS WE MOURN OUR DEAD**, treat our sick, and wonder what's next, somehow, someday, I hold onto some sense of hope. Hope that we can take this time of isolation and reflection to get past what really matters. What we need cherish and value. What we need to let go.

All around the world, the skies look more rich in detail. We can hear things with a deeper clarity. We pay attention to detail. People are showing their true selves and their true asses.

We are learning that we are all essential.

All who provide health care are essential.

The orderlies who make sure the sheets are fresh, the floors, bedpans and bathrooms are clean.

The EMT's who provide those first, vital steps on the path to recovery.

The nurses who keep watch and make sure the sick are comforted.

The doctors who work long hours to see that end stages to restored health is as smooth as it can possibly be.

Those who work our grocery stores, supermarkets, bodegas.

Those who help grow, pick, load and deliver our produce and vital products.

Bus drivers, train operators and all the key cogs associated with our mass transit.

Sanitation workers, building maintenance, mailman, delivery personnel.

Essential.

Anyone in the halls of power who has the temerity to say that these essentials don't deserve a decent, living wage, should be removed from power with the quickness.

Forget giving CEO's 'performance bonuses'. Give it ALL to our essentials.

We are going to have to reset EVERYTHING. How to structure our work force, urban planning, what we need to mass produce... EVERYTHING. I'm pretty sure right now hand sanitizer companies are doing a big time bum's rush to switch from 8-16 oz bottles to half and full gallons with light speed.

The hits that the arts world has taken have been particularly hard—especially for indie artists whose income came directly from touring, clubs, bars, theaters, concert halls, along with arts organizations who were already struggling to maintain profitable programming.

But with the new technologies in recording, distribution and streaming, artists, and arts organizations have been able to directly interact with their fan base. The fans, in turn, have finally coming around to the idea that they need to support the artists with their dollars as much they do with 'likes' on social media.

Great art has always emerged out of challenging times. Blues, rock n roll, punk, and hip hop all were direct byproducts of cultural malice and despair. Given that this current situation hit the world at all once, I eagerly await to see and hear the next other other.

To all those we have lost, their families and all who loved them, God Bless.

To our essentials, Godspeed.

For the rest of us, God help us.

Peace.

Earl

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