

Citizenship Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

By Sophia Wilson

With the gloom and uncertainties impacting every part of the globe—death, shock and awe, fear and anxiety engulfed humanity seeking to put it all together!

Crises are on every side. Is it clear that we are living in grand and awful times? Let's come to the bottom line amid the deadly weapon of COVID-19.

During this crisis it is important for all immigrants to do first things first. Those who are Green Card holders for at least five years, get your American citizenship and register to vote. You have nothing to lose.

Also, if you have relatives who are interested to immigrate to the United States, make haste and do the paper work before the doors finally shut.

Also, if you are one among the one million Green Cards who were issued Green Cards last year, set your focus on obtaining your US citizenship as soon as it is possible. "America" is rapidly clos-

ing its doors and your only targeted safety net, is to aim at becoming a US citizen.

Gone are the days when immigrants become Green Card holders, do nothing else but live and work happily, faithfully paid their taxes for over 30 years or more, sponsor their relatives to the US but never became citizens of the United States.

Then lo and behold, the immigration laws change and so are the applications and all paper works, including the citizenship fees. Besides, "you" could be at the wrong place at the wrong time—at times some strange things do happen—you are deported or scheduled to be deported and are at the mercy of a good lawyer!

Look what immigrants and some family members are currently facing. In the midst of the COVID-19 trauma President Trump, without empathy and a heart, launched his admission hard line, anti-immigration bigotry, and his xenophobic government policy.

How many Americans

would do the backbreaking jobs most immigrants do? Take President Trump's executive order real. He is adding changes upon changes, until the doors are finally closed.

For those immigrants who have become US citizens and registered to vote, make sure you encourage other family members and friends to go and do likewise. If you cannot vote you have no voice or rights. Your right lies in the power of your vote. Know the issues that concern your constituents and make sure they are a part of the political platform.

Remember to encourage family members to become engaged voters and hold your political leaders accountable. This is no time to sit idle, be involved, and make sure everyone knows the location of the polls in advance. And plan for upcoming November 3, 2020 Election Day. From now on, the thrust is on getting out the vote and ensures that every vote counts. Remember to seek out those who have no ride and ensure that they all get to the polls—it is at the polls

you experience your full rights and no one can take it away from you.

After you vote on November 3, 2020, there is nothing else you can do to change your vote. That is why before Election Day, do your homework; and review your list that you have kept about the president, state senator, representative, mayor, council and more.

Review your list on leadership—does he or she identify with the suffering and issues impacting your community? Remember, if you and your family and friends live in Hartford, for example, and you own property and pay huge amount of taxes. You have all the rights to ensure that the kids get a good and

quality education. And remember that schools have the right to provide you with good quality education including summer academic.

Know your rights and be involved in all aspects of your school and community partnership. Vote! It's your right! And become a citizen of the US. Don't be afraid of leaders who continue to wage anti-immigrant war and perplexities, fears and constant anxieties—even amid COVID-19. On Election Day, November 3, 2020, exercise the power of your vote, VOTE!

For citizenship education classes at CURET Caribbean Resource Center for distance-learning classes call (860) 247-0123.

McCrary Helps Secure Funding For Minority-Owned, Women-Owned Small Businesses



Sen. Doug McCrary

going forward.

Despite these systemic challenges, Connecticut has stepped up to ensure direct funding goes toward minority-owned and women-owned small businesses.

Governor Lamont announced minority-owned and women-owned small businesses can apply for a zero-interest line of credit up to \$20,000 through the COVID-19 Business Response Program. I am proud to have collaborated with Governor Lamont's office, the Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD), the Connecticut Minority Business Initiative, and the Hartford Economic Development Corporation (HEDCO) to get this program off the ground.

It is important that we do not neglect businesses in our community that have had difficulty in receiving financial assistance from Connecticut.

Minority-owned and women-owned businesses are encouraged to apply for the \$2 million program to be administered and underwritten by HEDCO.

To be eligible for the COVID-19 Business Response Program, the small business must be at least 51% minority-owned and/or women-owned, for-profit with no more than 20 full-time and/or part-time employees, in operation for at least six months, and in good standing with the Department of Revenue Services.

In addition to the zero-interest rate and no application fee, the line of credit can be forgiven if the business can prove the funds went toward covering the first three months expenditures as a result of COVID-19. Interested businesses can learn more at hedcoinc.com.

Immigrants On Frontline Of COVID-19

BRIDGEPORT, CT: Immigrants are indeed making a difference. The work of Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI) is an example of an organization carrying out outstanding services.

During this challenging time with the coronavirus outbreak, CIRI reports that 99% of its staff is working remotely, serving clients across all program areas.

"We are focused on supporting clients with unemployment applications, remote learning, and ensuring that all have access to housing, food, and other essentials. Our staff continues to work diligently to provide trauma-informed case management to clients throughout this crisis," the organization reports.

"If you were unable to participate and still wish to do so,

you can make a contribution at cirict.org/donate. Every \$1 you give directly supports CIRI and our clients' basic needs, including access to food, rent and utility payments, healthcare, and more. The Team at CIRI supplies the following facts:

Work in Healthcare:

- 28% of physicians
- 35% of home healthcare aides
- 15% of registered nurses

Immigrants Research Cures:

- 39% of medical and life scientists
- 30% of chemists/material scientists

Immigrants Prevent Spread Through Cleaning Occupations:

- 50% of housekeepers
- 25% of its janitors

Immigrants Help US Access Food:

- 54% of agriculture graders and sorters
- 42% of farm workers
- 16% of grocery workers

CIRI and its clients are in

need of the following items. Donations can be dropped off (no contact) at CIRI's Bridgeport office. Contact Christian Mendoza, cmendoza@cirict.org. Drop off CIRI's office is located at 670 Blinton Ave., Bridgeport, CT

Donation requests are the following: Paper goods—paper towels, toilet paper, hand sanitizer, personal hygiene items—deodorant, shampoo, body wash, body soap, feminine hygiene products, cleaning products—Lysol (or other anti-bacterial spray), cleaning wipes, dish soap, sewing goods—needles and thread, elastic to be used in making masks, fabric to be used in making masks, white rice, baby products—diapers, wipes, diaper rash ointment, baby food, computer devices.



Immigrants are on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis

Editorial

Our World Has Changed Part 1

By Carol Johnson

The coronavirus pandemic has changed our world through

the unfolding of the rampantly raging novel virus that has upended our way of life on planet Earth.

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Globally, humanity is battling the resulting COVID-19 disease. Unquestionably, these are challenging times for humans and the delicate interplay of life and death weighing in a balance.

The challenges are not limited to only the unfortunate individuals and families who have experienced the wrath of the COVID-19

disease and survived it, but all of us are bruised. The massive death rates worldwide have affected all: most likely, as individuals we know or have heard of the passing of someone or a family that has been touched by the fury of the disease. So we must empathize with families enduring the pains and sufferings. The reality is, ‘we’re all in this

together’—humans bearing the burdens of other humans—ill-health, lack of medical insurance, death; the colossal economic crisis—the economy has shrunken, unemployment, furloughed jobs and unpaid leave; financial ruins, and for many impending bankruptcy lay bare, plus there are other woes too numerous to discuss in this reflection.

Compassion and Empathy Elude a Few

An uncanny challenge has also emerged among an inconsequential group of people demonstrating some of the bad traits of human nature. It must be recognized, however, that humans are complex with fluid qualities. People can possess a combination of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ traits that may have been nurtured by a host of circumstances and the traits (‘good’ or ‘bad’) can easily surface when opportunistic conditions are within reach and manageable.

Accordingly, as the frenzy with the coronavirus rages on, there are wrongdoers pouncing on other

Continued on Page 3

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World Has Changed

Continued from Page 2

peoples' fears, pains and sufferings brought on by the misfortunes of the virus attacking them. Clearly, there are people who lack compassion and cannot empathize with people's sufferings. Instead, quickly the rascals are seizing the opportunities to do exploitations—overcharging for essential Personal Protective Equipments needed to administer care to victims of the coronavirus.

The good-for-nothing, swindlers—low-life—are extortionists with their off-the-wall schemes and pricey gluttony. Some go to an extent promoting fake testing and quackery remedies for the CORVID-19 disease. How are they able to live with themselves and their appalling behavior; what is their motivation? Greed!

In writing this commentary, the intent is NOT to spend time languishing over the unfathomable naughty, horrific characters who have surfaced and have chosen to operate at the 'bad' end of a 'good-bad' spectrum; hopefully, this is a temporary response on their part and they can change given the fluidity of human nature.

The intent of this reflection is simply to point out that there are people among us who are motivated by greed, and thus knowingly or unknowingly are adding to the pain and anguish associated with the coronavirus phenomenon.

Altruism

In dealing with the punishing coronavirus breakouts innumerable positive happenings have occurred by people performing extraordinary deeds.

These people have put the needs of others ahead of their own and their families; they are exhibiting benevolence, altruism, selflessness and self-sacrifice towards a greater cause—inherent qualities which stem from a sense of empathy; a capacity to see beyond the superficial differences of able-bodied versus people with physical limitations, gender, race, culture, ethnicity, and nationality; having compassion for the poorest among us living in dense urban settings, as well as those that are homeless. The 'good-doers' are simply relating to a common human essence and shared experi-

ences of fellow human beings. They are heroes!

Heroes Among Us

Among the heroic individuals are those in the healthcare workforce at the frontline, and in the trenches carrying out sacrificial services. They display uncommon dedication, applying years of educational preparation and training, and utilizing God-bestowed incredible talents. They include: scientists, physicians including mental health specialists, nurses, respiratory therapists; allied health professionals such as pharmacists, phlebotomists, practitioners in medical laboratories, dieticians, social workers; chaplains, ministers, priests, rabbis, and other members of the clergy.

Of course, we must not forget the dutiful workers carrying out backbreaking tasks cleaning healthcare facilities. All of these loyal workers are risking their lives daily as they carry out essential services for the betterment of humanity and are making huge personal and family sacrifices.

Other heroes are first responders (the term evolved in the media in 9/11 to refer to all emergency responders, originally referred to medical technicians with specialized training and who usually arrived before the ambulance at a scene of an emergency, such as an accident, natural disaster, or terrorism.

First responders typically include law enforcement officers, paramedics/EMTs, emergency state troopers, deputies, federal agents, school resource officers, firefighters, rescuers, military personnel, sanitation workers). They do not shy away when emergency crises arise and put themselves at risk as in the realities of the current environment and contracting the coronavirus.

Out-of-the Box Creativity

There are foundational changes and some new habits have come to light in spite of the devastation of the coronavirus. To illustrate: the out-of-the box creativity of diverse social media platforms have sprouted, enabling incredible collaboration among individuals, groups, and musicians since in-person gathering and group assembling are forbidden. Neither can members of choirs nor members of ensembles and orchestras congregate.

So musicians have become creative and concoct plans for working in conjunction with each other. All of the creative energies have resulted in syncing and turning out fantastic virtual musical performances.

Clearly, virtual teams are a fact of life in today's world as performers while "sheltering-in-place" within the confines of their respective homes. With "social distancing" the way to operate in these challenging times due to the proliferating nature of the coronavirus, the inven-

tive social media platforms are producing virtual performances, resulting in a glorious whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.

This form of modernism has rejuvenated our spirits, lessened our burdens, invigorated our courage, and supported the notion that "we're all in this together."

By-Products of the Coronavirus Pandemic

There are some good by-products of the coronavirus pandemic, hence noteworthy to mention a few: air pollution has recoiled and the blue sky is now visible given that people have parked their automobiles; likewise, the need for public transportation has reduced, thus carbon dioxide is fading—this is good for the atmosphere.

Observing the 'stay-at-home' observance has allowed us to abstain from driving our automobiles to places of employment and a host of other places for a multitude of reasons; animals are appearing in places where they never dared to venture because they feared the presence of human beings and invasion into the spaces of animals.

As the effects of the coronavirus become muted in time with evidence in the decline in infected persons and death rates, and new habits formed, such as caring for others and with broadened mindsets during our stint with 'stay-at-home' and 'social distancing.'

Moral Responsibility

Many people have exhibited boundless compassion in various ways for workers and volunteers in the trenches responding to people struck down with the coronavirus. People are donating masks, plus rendering other acts of kindness.

As fellow human beings we have a moral responsibility to help in meaningful ways (tangible or intangible), as we are able. All together our combined acts have changed our world, changed us, and our everyday activities relative to what is good, bad, or ugliness.

Together there is a sort of impactfulness with respect to the changes that have occurred; for instance: We have become more socially conscious about our responsibility to fellow humans, more attuned to the goodness inherent in humans; we have become more connected (rather than disconnected), and as humans we share fundamental traits and there are commonalities in our human nature.

Wouldn't it be a good thing if the esteemed changes become sustainable and morphed into long-lasting qualities and habits?

'We're All in This Together'

The truth is this: in a strange and twisted way, the positive and negative effects we have shared due to the coronavirus breakouts reinforce the brand new maxim: 'We're all in this together!'

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