

The Cure Within | CPD Blog

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Dear America,

With the outbreak of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus), I noticed an outpouring of complaints from those who are otherwise privileged. I realize that this is the first time some have had to struggle with finances, do without, or be isolated.

If this is your first time experiencing any of these things, please count your blessings! So often, humanity does not seek to understand the suffering of others until they have stepped outside of their comfort zone and into place of despair themselves. Now that you have had a new taste of life that so many live each day, remember those worldwide who have these struggles despite the pandemic.

While you were inside complaining instead of enjoying family, a lovely home, and food-filled shelves, there was someone all alone. This person was trying to decide between buying medication and eating. A person physically locked away from the world and suffering an emotional drought in silence. A person constantly overlooked by society now completely silenced. If this house arrest was not enough, the person had to stand on the sidelines while others protested wearing face coverings and argued to maintain so-called freedom by refusing to follow governmental protocols.

While you insisted upon going out to dinner or vacation when it was not necessary, there were police officers, firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, medical technicians, sanitation crews, nurses, and doctors risking their lives to save the world. Caught in this tug-of-war was a person who fought every day to stay alive. They went to work, rejecting medical attention and assistance to avoid getting sick and going to the hospital. As you stood in this light of privilege, someone else stood in the shadows, silently screaming for help.

While you whined about long lines at the drive-thru or unstocked shelves at the supermarket, food services workers and grocery clerks risked their lives to get a minimum wage check. There was a person who waited for days to get food and medical supplies delivered through the kindness of strangers. There was a person who did not have access to a pantry or car to wait in line for food, and at the same time a person who couldn't afford to purchase food in the very store that they worked in.

While you became frustrated about the distance education your child had to do, remember a parent who had to work 80 hours a week and still find a way to help their child. Remember, a teacher is giving up time, extra resources out-of-pocket, even driving to drop off materials past contract time. Remember there are families who constantly go without access to internet and technology resources that support educational opportunities or effective childcare. Your momentary inconvenience is a lifelong struggle for so many individuals.

While you had to walk to the store or take a bike, many people who are disabled like me had no access to needed supplies in stores, because public transport shut down. Stores opened early to allow the disabled and elderly to get supplies and medication, but it was often before paratransit services ran.

While you could not bear to be inside another minute, please think of the elderly and those with compromised immune systems. Many of them have to self-quarantine to avoid all forms of illness and are locked in their homes. Think of families with medically fragile children who fight each day to keep them alive, having to explain why they cannot go outside to play or see friends. Think of those for whom quarantine is not limited to this pandemic, but an ongoing part of sustaining life.

While expressing frustration about how different your world was, take a moment and recognize that you are just stepping into my everyday life, and the lives of those in America. Our America.

I hope that we will rise from this pandemic to become more active and aware as a people. A kinder people. A more loving people. A people who will recognize the marginalized in our country, and find a way to give them a voice. A people who will no longer ignore the suffering of others and will fight for injustice. A people who will no longer tolerate hate, bigotry, prejudice, racism, antisemitism, homophobia, and transphobia.

I hope that people will rise and go beyond building bridges or a more extended table. These things are good, but it is not enough. I not only want a seat at the table, but I also want all those forced into silence to have a voice. Let me be transparent: equity is and never will be equality. Equity is building a framework by which each person can most fully thrive in the situation that they are given. This process requires self-reflection and dedication to uplifting the voices of the marginalized. Equality comes as a result of consistent and persistent commitment to not only raise the platform, but give everyone the same privileges of speaking and being heard.

For now, the goal is to build and grow an equitable space by which all can thrive, be heard, and be uplifted, with injustice in all forms eradicated. While this goal is not new, the space has morphed to a place where demands have increased and the need ever present. Before we can begin to create the framework for equality, we must first define and recognize the cracks in our less than the equitable system. Until then, it will never be possible to obtain equality.

May we step out of our mental quarantine and conquer the actual virus that is corrupting us. May we seek to vaccinate ourselves with compassion, empathy, and most important, a call to action. May we determine to no longer wear the blinders of passive commitment to change. The time has come that we cannot stand idly and watch others die of this potent virus called hate and ignorance. The vaccination is only the beginning of a wondrous and treacherous journey to come.

Are you ready for a cure?

Sincerely Yours,

[Melissa Malcolm King](#)

A queer, disabled person of color who is invisible to society