

# Spring of 2020

Submitted by: Clare Mazack

The following is a collection of images taken by myself and some friends and neighbors during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spring of 2020. Descriptions are located below each image.



Photo Credit: My neighbor Pat Calchina

Location: UW-Madison campus

My neighbor, Pat, and the Wisconsin mascot Bucky the Badger demonstrating proper mask usage (although not proper social distancing...)



Location: Monona Drive, Madison, WI, right outside of Woodman's grocery store.



Standing six feet apart in a line at Willy Street Co-op (my local grocery store). A security officer monitors the door to let a certain number of people in at a time.



The neighborhood play structure, blocked off with “caution” tape. Kids mostly just ride their bikes now.



Photo credits: Celia Puelo, a friend in high school.

Location: East Washington Ave in Madison, WI.

A vehicle present at a protest against the Safer at Home order by Governor Evers. Note: Republican legislatures filed a lawsuit against Evers's extension of the order and the case will be heard this week.



Photo credit: Pat Calchina

One of many rocks hidden along a path in the woods by my condo.



Construction continues in Madison, as it is deemed “essential.”

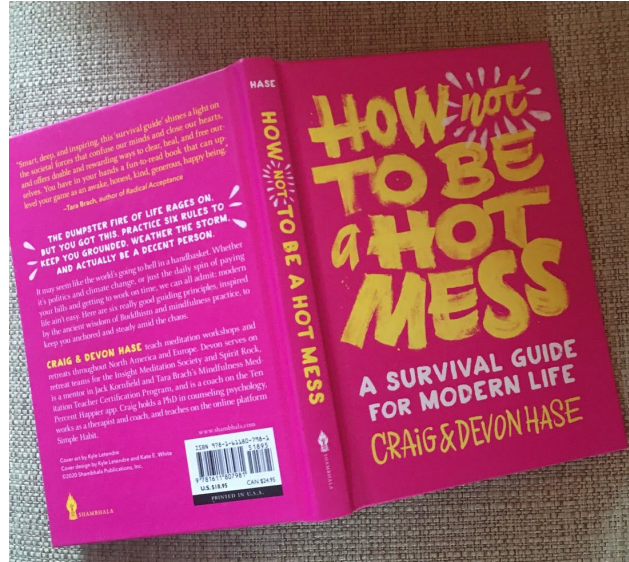


A social media post on Instagram. I don't have statistics on how gun violence in general has been affected by the pandemic, but I thought it was a noteworthy post to bring awareness to gun violence in schools.

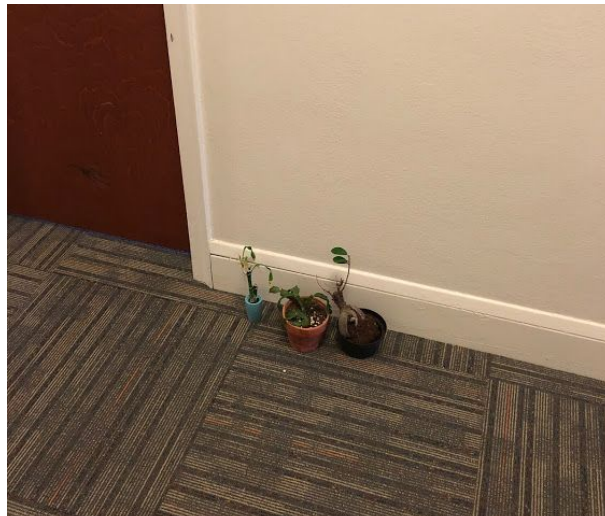




Photos taken by myself and neighbor Pat Calchina  
A collection of signs around Madison, WI.



The book my mom is currently reading which she recommends for this time. (She says the book is, and I quote, “written for people like you, Clare.” I think she meant it was accessible to college students, but...)



My lonely plants waiting in the hall of Wallace dorm, hoping my friend Sally will rescue them and bring them home with her. Because of unreliable transportation, many students, including myself, were rushed to get out of the dorms, and many plants were left behind. The plant on the right is not mine- somebody else must have been rushed too, and dropped it off to keep the others company!

## **Personal Reflections during the Spring of 2020**

*April 2nd, 2020: On awareness and privilege*

I remember early on in the semester in one of my classes we talked briefly about the Coronavirus outbreak in China, but it felt far away and disconnected from us. In the week leading up to Spring break, things suddenly became increasingly personal. Almost all other colleges and universities had shut down, and the possibility of going online seemed very real. Then we got an email saying we could not return to Macalester's campus. People still were shocked.

Considering that the pandemic had been occurring for *multiple months*, we should not have been shocked. Had we paid attention with a community mindset- in which we viewed our own wellbeing as interconnected to everyone's wellbeing- we would have a) had a more aware, compassionate response to those being most affected at the beginning of the pandemic and b) not been surprised when our lives were directly affected too. But the individualistic mindset that is so prevalent across the U.S. affected our collective awareness so that many of us felt threatened only when it impacted us personally.

It's also made disparities more apparent- there are communities who dealt with the issues so many are facing today- such unequal access to healthcare and chronic job insecurity- on a daily basis, long before the pandemic became a reality. Shocked reactions to the pandemic have revealed privilege in a much more obvious way.

*April 11th, 2020: On the primary election in WI.*

I am feeling incredibly frustrated with Wisconsin's voting system!! Specifically voter restrictions put in place by Republicans. The Wisconsin polls opened up on Tuesday. During a pandemic. This was despite health advisories and Governor Evers' request that the election be postponed. In Milwaukee, normally 180 polls open. Only 5 were able to open this year- but just as many people needed to vote. With all the back and forth in decision making, people were unsure if their absentee ballots would be counted past the original due date. I was phone banking for Jill Karofsky, and on a Thursday we were instructed to tell voters they could now request ballots for an extended three days, and send them in until a week after the election... a day later that decision had been repealed and we were supposed to tell voters it was too late. Already since the election, 51 cases of COVID-19 have been traced back to people who worked the polls or voted on election day.

On a more positive note, Jill Karofsky won! It was a critical supreme court seat for WI. My mom literally started singing when we found that out and cheering with neighbors, from a distance.

*April 16th, 2020: On living in cohousing right now*

I live in a cohousing community, which means that while we all live in our own condos, we share outdoor spaces. As a community, there have been lots of emails going around about social distancing. Many neighbors have instructed their kids to stay 6 feet apart from each other, and wear masks. But some families are more strict than others, and some don't really "believe" in social distancing at all. There are 37 kids here in total... if one kid gets sick here, I feel like everyone is going to be exposed.

There are such benefits to communal living. For example, two families just had babies (can you imagine bringing a child into the world right now?!) and everyone has been bringing them food and helping out. When somebody is sick (one neighbor was travelling a lot for work the week before the stay at home order was put in place and likely got Covid), people bring them groceries every week. And many of us are teaming up to sew face masks.

These situations show how community is simultaneously a blessing and a challenge at this time.

*April 28th, 2020: On climate change*

I am sad and confused that people don't see the links between the pandemic and climate change. Our systems are faltering: healthcare is inaccessible, industrial agriculture is an unsustainable way to feed the world, our elections are rigged, and job and housing insecurity remain high. Faltering systems are not just an issue we face today, with the pandemic. *This will be our new normal* as climate destruction continues to devastate ecosystems, economies, and communities. I sometimes feel frustrated that people, including myself, are using this time to relax outside, watch TV, and complete instagram challenges when there is organizing to be done and facemasks to be sewn and food to be grown and shared. That said, there has been a lot of positive organizing and community care going on, I don't at all want to diminish that.

*May 4th, 2020: Some random thoughts*

I feel grateful that the beginning of the pandemic is affecting us during Springtime- it means (since I'm in Madison) we can spend time outside! I do my homework on the porch and my mom does her work just on the other side of the



window. Whenever one of us is bored, or I need a suggestion for the paper I'm writing, we just knock on the window and talk to each other.

It's also been so fun to watch neighbor kids out my window while doing homework! My three year old neighbor learned how to ride a bike without training wheels in the month since I've been home, and my two year old neighbor likes to practice walking backwards around the sidewalk with her dad :)

Some songs I've been listening to on repeat these days: "Change" and "Broken" by Tracy Chapman. I think they vibe with what's going on today.

The other day our neighbors were packing up their van with camping gear. They were thinking about leaving town to go stay on some friend's land, afraid that soon people would be breaking into houses and stealing things in our neighborhood. Most of me felt like they were overreacting, but a part of me also didn't.

I was grocery shopping at Woodmans last week. I was in the frozen meal aisle and this woman walks by, looks at a particular frozen meal, and says "shit, the prices go up for that every week!"

We faceted my grandmother the other day, who recently had a stroke and is in hospice in a nursing home. The healthcare facility is not allowing visitors for the safety of residents, so we can't go say goodbye in person. It's hard to see her lay there alone, not knowing who is around her. Although she couldn't talk, I knew she could feel our presence in the room when we visited. Now she can't see us very well on the phone and since her memory isn't so good, she doesn't understand why we haven't visited her in a few months.

On a more positive note, I've seen other members of my family a lot more over zoom now that I'm home. My other grandma and I have been doing yoga over zoom weekly, which I love. And we've been having weekly themed zoom meetings with all of my cousins and aunts and uncles where we dress up- "Prom" was a theme one week.

I've seen so many new neighbors and dogs out and about who I've never seen before! Who knows how long we've all lived in the same few blocks? I also love biking through neighborhoods and seeing all of the hearts up in windows.

My dad works at the VA hospital. They're asking for volunteers to go work in Chicago if it gets flooded with COVID-19 patients. If a lot of people have to go, then he'll get pulled up to work on the COVID-19 floor here in Madison. Right now, this isn't the

case, which feels good. But there's no telling when cases could spike, which is a little scary.

I'm frustrated with the delay in stimulus checks and unemployment for people who need it. One of my good friends isn't getting her unemployment, but she's still paying for rent and food, and doesn't have a family support network to fall back on. It's scary because she also has asthma, and no health insurance.

*April 20th, 2020: On a recognition of impermanence and mortality*

Life has never been permanent. Everything we build our lives around has the capacity to fall apart at any instant, and I understand that now more than ever.

I can't speak for other cultures, but the dominant society of the U.S. likes to brush all thoughts of impermanence away. We build our lives around constant motion and improvement: seeking money, fulfilling work, better homes, "success." We fill our schedules up with jobs, classes, gym memberships, netflix shows, and a million other distractions of things that may or may not be that important in the big picture.

That doesn't erase the fact that we remain human, and we remain mortal. Every once in a while we are brought back to the reality of life's impermanence; through an injury, maybe, or the death of a loved one. But in my experience, the dominant culture I'm in doesn't prioritize grief or reflection. And we too often return to focusing on petty details.

Yet, we remain human, and we remain mortal. The pandemic has reminded the world of this. We are forced to live completely in the moment in a way many of us never have been forced to before. Will school return in person in the Fall? Should I commit to a housing lease with my friends? How severe will food shortages be around the globe? What will the results of the 2020 elections be? Who that we know will get sick? And who of them will die?

So, I'm trying my hardest to live in the moment, since that's really all we have

*May, 2020: On Inheriting Dysfunction*

Just as we don't choose the families we're raised in, we did not choose to be subjected to a capitalist nation that values profit over wellbeing. We did not choose to inherit an industrialized, globalized economy. We did not choose to come of age in a critical moment in time where we stand on a teeter-totter that leans more and more towards social injustices and global climate destruction. And we most certainly did not choose to be in a pandemic during college.

The question is, what do we do with this inheritance? The despair we feel from generations before us, and the despair we can feel rushing towards our futures could easily overwhelm us. Or worse, the individualism we feel from the safety of our own privileges could make us oblivious to the inevitable destruction occurring around, and to, us. Let us not be paralyzed.

I like to think about two of my favorite Educational Philosophers: John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makaguchi. In the words of Professor Ruthanne Kurth-Schai of the Educational Studies department at Macalester, Makiguchi “was well aware that apathy, despair and deference to authority pose the most significant obstacles to collective survival in the face of deep crisis. Hope instead lies in the capacity of common people to *live* their values and assume responsibility for working together to advance the common good... Rather than submitting to imposed constraint and control; rather than accepting an impoverished view of humanity and the natural world; rather than lapsing into fear, anger, cynicism, apathy and despair; both philosopher/scholar/activists attempted to educate the masses to confront social crises with creativity and courage. Diligently, collaboratively, they worked to educate all people to find *meaning*, to act with *integrity*, and therefore to *experience genuine hope*, rooted neither in denial nor wishful thinking, but instead grounded in real-world accomplishments” (Kurth-Schai, 2)