

**Roman Marecik:**

For the last 13 years, I have worked as a massage therapist. As you might imagine this is not the best kind occupation in current circumstances. I have no job at the moment. But I always like to see the glass half full. I really appreciate more free time which enables me to meditate, read books, think and... reinvent my career. It seems one has to be more creative to survive these days. Eventually, I have some time and space to pamper the creative side of my personality.

Currently, I am working on an internet project called 'OMIXIMO' which is going to be a a mixture of many different components. I don't know if you are familiar with Spiral Dynamics. It is an incredibly interesting and accurate model of the evolution of the human psyche. I first stumbled upon it over a decade ago and it helped me understand human behavior much better. I keep being fascinated by it. However useful this knowledge is, it is not known by many people (at least the people that I met). And so my idea is to create a kind of Spiral Dynamics virtual guided tour on Zoom. Instead of delivering a boring lecture, I am going to make it interactive and fun. A role-playing game with visual art and literature kind of event. I am pretty passionate about it and I hope it works out well. First I am going to do it for the Polish audience, but if it goes well... who knows, maybe I will think about the English language version. This is my solo project and it requires quite a lot of work but I hope to launch it in a couple of weeks.

This is not only about my passion. My intension is to increase people's awareness in order to navigate better in this complicated world. I think this is crucial, especially in this difficult time of global crisis.

---

**Brian Winkeler:**

I attend 5:00am classes at the local gym most mornings, and started seeing a personal trainer there last summer.

Last August he heard Bernie Sanders on the Joe Rogan podcast and it was the first time he'd paid attention to anyone articulating the need for deep societal change. He mentioned that to me in a session so we started lightly broaching the subject of politics (I'm in a super red county of a super red state so I always approach cautiously). Bernie clicked with him, so we started talking about Bernie and AOC and Greta Thunberg and

Elizabeth Warren and I discovered he'd never registered to vote (he was 27 at the time). It never crossed his mind as something to do.

I softly gave him as much information as I could and encouraged him and last month he and his wife received their voter registration cards a week before the Oklahoma primary. He texted me a picture of his card when he got it and I got choked up seeing it.

In that time, he's started engaging with more of his friends and he's encouraged a number of them to register.

I've purposefully tried to reduce my angry political voice on Twitter, and reduce my time on it as well, since it gets to be like anger quicksand after a while. I quit Facebook for the second and final time last summer.

I don't know how to replicate this kind of experience – it happened organically. But I think a better world comes from finding ways to connect with people who are open to change and open to becoming more involved and sharing resources with them and allowing them the space to decide for themselves to engage.

As I think about it, I honestly maybe think the answer to "If this is our opportunity to make the world a better place, where do we start?" is: Destroy Facebook.

---

### **Anonymous:**

I have little doubt we'll see significant change come out of this event. I'm optimistic that it will eventually be positive. But if I look to history as my guide then I think the road will be long and hard. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner published "The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today" in 1873. The seeds of that progressive movement didn't start in 1873, and it would still take another 60 years and a Great Depression to garner enough big tent support for FDR's New Deal. That progressive revolution resulted in a slew of positive outcomes for labor, the middle class, and civil rights. The advancement of technology during that period is nothing short of amazing.

For a while I've believed that we are in a time comparable to that stretch between 1873 and 1933. Wealth and power have been

concentrating for decades. The topic has finally risen into public consciousness using names like "income inequality" and "wealth inequality". For the time being the ideological puritans bark loudest. We're all reduced to caricatures: capitalist v socialist, conservative v liberal, rural v urban, and many others. The extreme upper class also learns from history, and they have new protectionist tricks to prolong the status quo. I have no idea how long they can keep it up but nothing lasts forever.

So are we closer to 1873 or 1933? Unfortunately, it's not that simple and we'll only know in retrospect. My guess is that we're somewhere between half way and the beginning of the next cycle. Drawing a naive parallel, the 1918 flu pandemic played a role in that last progressive revolution, but it would still take another 15 years and a Great Depression. I think it's fair to say that the massive economic downturn of the Great Depression played the largest role in shifting the perceptions that resulted in the biggest political, societal, and technological changes of the era. I'm certain that long periods of shifting views and pandemic-sized events had a large influence on how it all played out though.

I wonder if this 2020 COVID-19 pandemic will be a catalyst for economic collapse. I think the speed and amount of change that occurs will largely depend on that answer. Either way I think we'll see changes to how we live and work. I think COVID-19 will accelerate investments in automation, telework, and outdated technologies that became overwhelmed and the target of public ire (like unemployment claims systems). I think we'll see more doors that open on their own and other ways for us to avoid touching the same things in public spaces. But it's not really bringing us together under a common cause. Our economic and political divisions appear exacerbated by this situation. A few unanimous votes in DC to spend lots of money is hardly a sea change. And people got along better for just a little while after 9/11 too before they quickly settled back into their corners. From my perspective all sides continue to peddle in divisive rhetoric and us v them mentalities. I doubt this pandemic alone will affect the current social, political, and economic contracts.

I keep looking at the drastic increases in recent unemployment numbers

and wondering if it's a harbinger of our near future. I think there's a chance it is. I think it's possible this pandemic is also a catalyst for extremely hard economic times. I think positive outcomes will eventually emerge, but I worry about the amount of suffering that will happen along the way. I want the current cycle to complete. I'm ready for the next progressive movement to take hold. But I'm woefully unprepared for so many in the country I love to endure prolonged pain and suffering, especially since the least deserving of that suffering will be the ones who carry it most. I have trouble reconciling the idea that the positive socioeconomic and political sea changes I want are potentially tied to such a devastating event. I have a young son, and I remember the effect the Great Depression had on my grand parents. It was traumatic, and the idea that my son will have to endure a similar era destroys me. The only solace I have is the belief that on the other side we will be closer, stronger, and better prepared to take on the following cycle.

I think the best thing we can do in times like this is follow the advice of Fred Rogers to "Look for the helpers." Even better, we can be the helper and enable others to be helpers too. We should be ready and willing to forgive old grudges. More than anything we need to listen to each other so we have the tools to reject those seek to divide us. We need to teach our children to be better than us. I strongly believe that if we prioritize the health and welfare of our middle class first, then our economic and political needs will follow.

---

**Karmela Padavic-Callaghan:**

Once the worst parts of the pandemic are behind us and we get a stab at establishing a less fearful way of being, I hope that we can remember that community is more than a group of people added together, that it needs to be built consciously, cared for with continuity and maintained through action.

For many of us who have the privilege of working from home, the past months have underlined how much we usually take our social connections for granted. We chat with co-workers in the hallways of our workplace, schedule last-minute lunches and dinners with friends because they live or work nearby, keep friendly acquaintance with staff at coffee shops and grocery stores we frequent by virtue of just being there often. Right

now, all social interactions require effort, facilitation and conscious use of (specialized) tools. We have to keep picking-up our phones, make Zoom accounts, figure out how to share a meal or watch a movie while staying physically apart, how to pay attention to screens without getting fatigued or distracted because they now frame so many things and people we love. Intentional building of community and thinking about community care used to be top of mind mainly for organizers and activists, but now we are all engaging in it whether we know it or not. I sincerely wish for all of us to recognize this and let that recognition inform and guide our future behavior. Similarly, I hope we can all invest in learning how to provide mutual aid more (especially if that means relying on consumerism as a sign of love and care a lot less) and keep checking-in with people in our lives, even when it's not a time of crisis, and even when we think they are too strong to need it (and right now no-one is that strong). Channeling bad energy into getting in touch with a friend who may also be struggling will certainly help us all more in the long term than being angry or scrolling Twitter ever could. I hope there will be more realization around the fact that we cannot ignore the lives of once they intersect with ours even when tracing that intersection has nothing to do with tracing paths of possible infection. And I hope we can re-think our idea of what a network is, wrestle the term away from being monopolized by social media giants and professional development experts.

Not only does maintaining social connections now require lots more effort, but many small interactions that we can't have any more are becoming increasingly more visible to us. The amount of random chit-chat, friendly locking of eyes and casually exchanging compliments or just smiles (impossible with a mask on) suddenly feels gargantuan because it is absent. Many of these interactions used to happen with people who are not our friends or family, but rather workers in service professions. They are people that we do not really know or understand as people, but still rely on tremendously. Thinking of those people in particular, it feels very important to not keep rendering their role in our lives and their labor, emotional or otherwise, invisible after the pandemic. In many cases this may look like advocating for better working conditions and better labor practices. We should not shy away from engaging with that sort of advocacy even when it can sometimes feel political enough to be somewhat unsavory. This sort of political advocacy can be seen as an act of community care as much as leaving Easter candy on a neighbor's doorstep or paying for a friend's contactless take-out birthday meal. It is a presidential election year here in the United States, but the fact that so much of the crisis response has been handled by governors and other state officials while the federal government has come off as confused at best and negligent and indifferent at worst has me thinking about the importance of local politics and participating in the kind of elections and campaigns that do not get nation-wide attention. To maintain the health of our communities (in every sense of the word) and take care of those in them that the crisis is affecting the most, we might have to educate ourselves on how to think of community as a political entity and act on that explicitly. Along the same lines, I want to rethink institutions that I am a part of, for instance the university that employs me. I am trying to parse how to make it more accessible, more transparent and more accountable to its constituents. I hope I am not the only one taking stock of how much influence and

power I can have in reshaping something I am contributing to already, and how that pressure may be amplified if I join and coordinate with my peers. If the need to stay home, possibly stop working and definitely let go of so many activities that usually bring us comfort or entertainments teaches us anything, I would want it to be that we are all a part of something bigger than ourselves and that that something doesn't have to be amorphous, incidental or toothless.

Karmela Padavic-Callaghan is a physicist and a writer based in Urbana, IL and Brooklyn, NY.

---

## **Anonymous**

In light of the pandemic and quarantine, what would make life better for everyone? What should we prioritize? Huh. First, having fewer things rather than more things is one place to start. I am no minimalist, but being stuck in the house staring at a bunch of junk that I really don't need has been an eye-opener. My mind would be less cluttered if I didn't have so much stuff. I'd be more focused, perhaps on things that truly matter. Plus, a less-is-more philosophy minimizes your carbon footprint and that's good for the planet. So maybe if we all started to prioritize what's really important to us, what we really need, that would be good. (And hey, in full disclosure, I say this as an avid collector of books, comic books, art and other nerdy fetish material. Just being honest!)

The second, and probably the most important — this country needs some form of universal healthcare. A baseline version, at the very least. Most of the western world has been able to accomplish this miraculous feat while the United States, with all of its resources and power, is still debating what should be a non-issue. What this whole situation should be making clear is that an asteroid under the guise of a pandemic virus can hit each and every one of us at the same time. BOOM. Doesn't matter how much preparation we have made, or how much money we have earned, or how much education we have, or how talented we are, or how attractive we are, or how big a celebrity we are. We are all vulnerable. If there were some baseline version of universal healthcare in place, MAYBE we could've gotten testing into hot spots sooner. Stopped the transmission chains. Saved lives. Put less stress on hospitals and urgent care facilities. MAYBE average people wouldn't be shitting themselves thinking, "What if I get COVID-19 and die, and leave my loved ones destitute and buried under medical bills?" It's obscene. The last 60 days (60 goddamn days?!) should reinforce the fact that we need to invest in our citizenry. Not just in the form of opportunities and jobs, but in their health and well being. The healthier people are, the longer they live, the more they can do for you. So yes, you rich conservative dickhead, you will still have someone that you can pay as little as possible to bag your groceries, cook your fries, and clean your homes. And if that person gets sick, guess what? They have healthcare and you don't have to worry about them dying and then you having to do those things yourself. See how that works out?

---

**Rich Barrett:**

While everyone is experiencing this in a different way, I know a lot of people who, when you check in on them to see how they're hanging in there, the answer is a guilty: "You know, this isn't so bad for me."

I'm one of them.

For people like myself, who are lucky to have a job that sent its workforce home early and that doesn't *really* need us to come back to the office, this has been a lesson of stripping out everything in our lives that was "extra": commutes, meetings, after-school activities, trips to the store, social engagements with acquaintances. None of these things were bad, and I'm not saying I don't miss them exactly, but I wonder if we're all in the process of [KonMari](#)-ing our lives until we become essentialists. I'm sleeping 8+ hours a night, reading books, playing with the kids, going for walks, exercising, spending some time with my own thoughts and still getting all my work done. This wasn't happening before.

People that have gotten sick are, no doubt, learning to appreciate what is essential in life, but really all of us are finding that the most essential thing is time and I don't know if we're going to easily give that back when this is over.

---

**Anonymous:**

I was talking to my sister this weekend and one thing that's hitting us both is that even in a pandemic crisis, we can't escape the workaholism and perfectionism of our culture (and specifically the culture of our family of origin). We both feel this sense of self-judgement because we're worried that we're not "doing enough" or "taking advantage of this opportunity" of being at home. Like some sort of perverse quarantine FOMO. This urge to "rise to the challenge."

The reality is that my experience of isolation is not the same as other folks' experience of isolation, but my story of isolation isn't being told. So I'm feeling even more isolated in my isolation. I already had a hard time feeling like I was able to "keep up" during my

normal life, but now I've got firehose streams of media pointed at my brain telling me to panic and be calm, to take advantage of the situation to better myself while also just relax and be forgiving of myself, to reconnect with everyone I've ever known to make sure they're okay while establishing healthy boundaries and making time for self-care and stillness.

And the kicker is that before this I was able to avoid a lot of stuff to keep myself sane. I dropped off social media and restricted my media diet so I wouldn't worry too much. But with COVID-19 I'm getting \*more\* media than ever before, and this crisis is permeating everything. Characters in Animal Crossing wearing masks. Endless emails from corporate CEOs pretending to care. My escapist videos on YouTube. Leaders propping up a failed economic and political system. Every post on Reddit. There's literally no escaping this thing, even for my mental health, even to imagine for a moment something \*else\*. That's why I'm having COVID-19 nightmares. There's just no escape.

So to answer your question...where do we start, what should we prioritize? My answer is to try to find some space, within myself or outside myself, that isn't full of 24/7 COVID-19.

It's no easy task trying to be a sane and caring person in an insane and uncaring world.

---

**Robert Lamb, writer/podcaster:**

I suppose one observation I keep coming back to is that the pandemic has forced us to re-balance aspects of our lives: our relationships with our loved ones, our friendships, or collaborations, our passions and our personal approaches to self-care. It's forced us to reconsider some of our demons. New constraints force us to realize, "Oh, what worked before won't work now. I guess I need to find a new way." But I think there is also the potential to find better ways, fresh approaches and perhaps spaces to re-examine our previous approaches or balance. The challenge, I think, is whether we can keep what we've learned when we transition back into something like our previous lives. Will it simply be a return, or will it be a revival?

---

**Corinna Bechko:**

Honesty, I've been thinking about this, and I don't believe it's possible. At this point maybe we can stop it from falling into utter chaos and ruin? Maybe? Like if we try really, really hard? But of course a ton of folks will fight that, so it makes it that much more exhausting. But I think we are well and truly into William Gibson's Jackpot territory now and it's optimistic to think that much of anything, much less humans, will survive long term. That said, I think this pandemic, horrific as it is, will just be a blip in the face of

climate catastrophe. And it's not like we can't do anything about that. It's just that we won't. If we did, the crisis could be averted and we could perhaps even thrive. I just don't have much faith in our leaders and it's dreadfully difficult to do solo while fighting them.

Corinna Bechko  
Writer of Science and Fiction  
Fossil Preparator

---

### **Sean Allen Fisher**

An abbreviated case for expanding our collective imagination.

Like many, I would start with changing the capitalist and political systems. But a large part of that requires us to change societal perceptions of those systems. I often think about what Mark Fisher has to say about "capitalist realism." Basically, the inability to imagine an alternative to the current economic system. Odd that the current mud we find ourselves mired in is largely due to the failings of our imagination. Where we once thought about, "what could be," we not only think about "what is." Will we continue with this cognitive dissonance and insist that our problems are caused by some detail we missed or myriad phantoms to blame or can this current crisis shine a light upon our current systems and show them for what they are? That the hierarchical "representative" governmental system was not the stone tablets brought down from the mountain to live by for all time. Rather, it was a renegotiation of the feudal system in its time and for the benefit of a small population within that time. There is no end point. We must constantly and collectively change and evolve as time advances. Otherwise, we are truly trapped in the limbo of, "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

The first imagine, then create.

---

### **Sarah Cavrak:**

I think we start by acknowledging how we personally feel, and what we need, in each moment. It's tough to take action when you're depressed. It's near impossible to imagine what a better world even could look like if you're anxious and scared and spiraling out into that place of catastrophizing all the possible scenarios that could befall us next. Until we acknowledge how we feel and how we're going to move and shift through our emotional responses to this, in any moment, then I'm not sure any of us will realistically have the capacity to envision a better world and take the necessary actions.

So for me, the work always starts at home; at home in my body; at home with my family. And then, once we collectively have a handle on the health and safety of our personal selves and family units, then we can start to expand our mental and physical efforts outward toward a place of possibility and visioning for the kind of world we long for. It's only then that we can begin to engage the community and determine how it is that we want to live and navigate within this new reality we're facing .

If I can't honor my own needs then I certainly can't honor the needs of the world. I could certainly try (and people do), but all my actions at that point would be driven by what I think I should do or by what my ego is telling me to do. And both of those have a very short longevity. Lasting change requires small, consistent, incremental shifts in how each of us lives and moves through the tiny moment in our lives. The more we can treat our current emotions with compassion, and the more that we can make daily choices that nourish ourselves and our families (rather than simply distract us from the discomfort, frustration, and anger we feel), then the more practiced we will be at extending those loving and authentic actions out into the world.

And that would be revolutionary.

Dr. Sarah Cavrak

---

**Andrew Wallace**

Teacher and Political Action Committee Chair for local teacher's union

Replacing the entrenched systems of inequality feels somewhere in between solving a Rubik's cube with one hand and navigating an Escher drawing. Everything is interconnected and tough to move, there's no real starting point, the circumstances are constantly shifting, and we often feel like we're never getting anywhere. I'm full of rage, but still hopeful, even as we're all aware of the decades of work to come. In consideration, here are a few priorities: a universal health care system, the organization of labor and a democratized economy, equal voting rights, a fully funded public education system; and a fair/humane immigration system with amnesty. And environmental protection.