

La Cabronavirus, a time for mutual support

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COVID-19 happens when the coronavirus attacks an organism, a human organism. And it is so unpredictable that a 70-year-old can succumb and be gone in 3 days—but his mother infected at 92, can survive. A 50 or 25-year-old will be gone just as easily while others will suffer mild symptoms and recover. Why? We ask. How can it be that those who are weaker don't always die, but younger and stronger people do? In this same way, many businesses and organizations will die while others survive. The attacks from the coronavirus affect not just our bodies but our livelihoods and our cultura—ultimately, our way of being. How we respond as a people to this crisis will matter.

Scientists predicted such an eventuality, a virus running rampant around the world killing many innocent people. Many knew this was coming, but as Naomi Klein explains in *The Shock Doctrine*, when such massive tragedies strike, the rich get richer at the expense of those suffering. Her 2007 book brilliantly explained this capitalist response to catastrophe. Already we can see this happening with the pandemic of our times. We must recognize and resist these machinations con conciencia y valor. It is time for us to uphold our values, our moral imperatives, to act. There are many examples of individuals and groups who are stepping forward to assist others during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing sustenance for the body and for the soul—for everyone whose access to these essentials has been cut off in these trying times.

For me, one way to contribute is to write. And in the midst of incredible sorrow at the loss of dear friends, I turn to poetry. I am not alone. Many artists post daily work—their own or others' on FaceBook. Virtual poetry readings, concerts, artistic works of all kinds reveal a vibrant creative world doing all it can to survive.

I know that the arts will help pull us through. If our world is to be upended this way, *todo alreves y con las patas pa'riba hay que hacer algo. Lo más sencillo, lo más seguro es protección*—both for ourselves and for others. We must all step forward and offer our support and protection for each other in whatever way we can; insuring that we all survive—individuals, families, organizations and communities.

We are all having to regroup, retool and retrain to make things work. “*Cuando una puerta se cierra otra se abre*,” my grandmother was fond of saying, when things didn't go the way she planned. For everyone *muchos de los planes que teníamos* for this spring and summer are no more. Figuring out how to go forward in the midst of this pandemic will no doubt test our



One of Esperanza's highlights of 2019 was the selection of Blanca Rodríguez and Beatriz Llamas, the surviving members of Las Tesoros de San Antonio, as 2019 NEA National Heritage Fellows.

resilience and our resolve as families, professionals, workers, artists, health care workers and communities. The world is shifting. It will change, but it will go on.

The eternal cycle of life and death is made more evident. As I write this over 50,000 lives are gone from our country, and I suspect it is an undercount. More than were killed in the Vietnam War and many more than died during 9/11—two significant events in our history that changed our lives. So, too, will this one event impact us, change our way of life. More than ever, we must hold those dear to us close and find ways to support each other.

Sabiduría. Yes, our ancestral knowledge. Our core values, values the Esperanza has practiced and promoted for

more than 30 years, values that reflect our similarities and differences, values that lead us to generosity and solidarity rather than fear and competition will serve us well during this time. These values include an awareness of our interconnections, globally and locally, something the Esperanza has been working for all along as we struggle to validate, preserve and nurture all of our communities in all of their wondrous forms. There are so many struggles that we must continue in this new world that now lays exposed by the coronavirus.

No hay mal que por bien no venga. It is difficult to see any good coming out of the current downward spin, but I know that there will be better times ahead. This too shall pass. The resilience of our gente and of our spirits will once again be manifest. We will prevail but to do so we must support one another and the organizations that are there for us like the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. I challenge all who are reading this to do just that, support one another, be there for your neighbor, your family, but also for strangers amongst us. And be there for the organizations that provide the social glue and the unity that makes us stronger together.

Today, if you can, join the Buena Gente of the Esperanza by signing up to become a monthly donor or sending in a donation to keep us moving forward. Send a check to 922 San Pedro, SAT 78212 or visit esperanzacenter.org to make a contribution, and look for us to continue our cultural offerings and social justice work that is so much needed in these times of the coronavirus pandemic.

Gracias,
Norma E. Cantú,
Conjunto de Nepantleras



Elvia Niebla & Norma Cantú
enmascaradas por el COVID-19