

Pinche Corona Lockdown 2020

by Monica Palacios

The start of the world collapsing around me was Super Tuesday, March 3. I knew I could have voted before the 3rd but I felt an obligation as a patriotic Chicana Lesbian American to vote for the primary on the actual date. I ended up waiting in line for 45 minutes! I have never waited in line to vote for a local or national election. I do realize people across the country had to wait more than 5 hours to place their votes but for me, the wait was ridiculous. It wouldn't have been so bad but I was between two middle aged white men who were having a conversation, using their loud obnoxious voices, both spewing ferocious bad breath. Dead animal mixed with rotten tuna sandwiches—breath. I tried to move around in the limited space but their combined halitosis set my eye brows ablaze. Then to find out at the end of the day, that my candidate Elizabeth Warren didn't get the votes she deserved, was disheartening. We were left with Biden and Bernie. Two. Old. White. Dudes. Ugh!

From that day forward news of COVID-19 became a frickin' tsunami. Throughout March across the country and especially in New York, people were getting infected and dying of this disease at alarming rates. I started to really freak out because at the end of February I had traveled to Modesto, CA., for a family birthday. I had been on a Southwest plane twice and had been in airports four times. The news was reporting that people who recently travelled were transporting the virus. That was me! Hi-jole! I had to really work on my CTFD—calming the fuck down.

California was the first state in the nation to order all residents to stay at home in order to curb the virus. I felt comforted by my Governor Gavin Newsom, a democrat, for understanding the severity of this disease and was listening to science and medical experts. Unlike the fool fake president who was boasting that the corona virus was simply a hoax created by the democrats. Finally after thousands of people were infected and had died, on March 13 the jack-o-lantern in the White House, had to declare COVID-19 a national emergency. I took to Facebook with my first corona virus post: "I want to send everyone love, patience, kindness and a shot of tequila. I know everyone is on edge about this whole pinche corona virus.

Makes me want to scream. I'm trying my best to stay calm and understand that we're going to get through this extremely challenging time. I would like to suggest all bills, rents, mortgages be postponed. Cuz I don't have any money. Do you? And definitely the ass*ole in the White House—has got to go! He needs to be physically removed TODAY! He doesn't give a shit about anyone but himself and is responsible for not acting sooner about this virus--he is killing people daily. Get him the f**k out! Oh, and, I need work. Hire me."

Everyone needed work but couldn't. All businesses, except the essential ones, had to shut down. Americans went from being employed to being unemployed in a snap. All my performing and teaching gigs lined up for 2020 were cancelled. My income was cancelled! As a writer/performer, I have lived paycheck to paycheck all my life and miraculously I have survived. But with most businesses shut down, I couldn't even look for a funky two bit job unless I wanted to expose my 60 year old ass to the virus. I was part of the demographic that COVID-19 was affecting the most and I didn't want to die—call me old fashioned.

I started to truly trip and wonder: Will I be able to perform in front of a live audience again? Will I be able to teach in front of class in the future? Am I going to die without having had a romantic evening with Flo from the Progressive Insurance commercials?

The uncertainty of it all was making me flip out. Not knowing if my career was going to continue was mind blowing. I couldn't help but think of the fact that my performing career started during the AIDS epidemic of the early 1980s and now my mind was wandering to dangerous territory: Is my career going to end during the corona pandemic? It was a threatening thought that I kept way back in my head behind my first French kiss with a boy—gross!

Throughout March, infection and death were taking their tolls on everyone, especially in Black and Latino communities. The fact that the United States was responding so slowly and chaotically because of the horrible president was insanity. The orange monster was purposely not providing cities with all their



On Super Tuesday, March 3, 2020, Monica voted in the Presidential primary in California.

hospital and medical needs because their governors were not kissing his ass.

I would wake up in the mornings and think: Should I get up? Is today going to be worth it? My ganas to participate in life were gone, man. I didn't want to off myself but I couldn't do any creative work. I would stare at my writing projects, hoping something fantastic would come to me but nothing came. Nada. Washing my hands a millions times a day, wearing masks and wearing rubber gloves, took getting use to. Living this way seemed surreal like I was floating in a bubble and I couldn't touch anyone. I was experiencing many emotions: fear, anger, sadness, shock, wanting to kick the president in the balls!

Grocery shopping became a nightmare as everyone believed they had to buy everything all at once and hoard toilet paper. I had been shopping at the mainstream stores thinking those were my only options. One morning I ventured to the Mexican store Northgate Market in Culver City. There I found a pleasant busy atmosphere: customers and employees getting along while rancheras blasted over the speakers. All products were stocked and there were no long check out lines. They had toilet paper but it was limited to one big ass package per family. Being there reminded me of my mom and how back in the day, we would go to our local Mexican store for ingredients for her outstanding menudo. Being in this supermercado made me feel loved.

Approaching rent for April first, the hashtags #CancelRent and #CancelMortgages started to float around on Twitter. It was assuring to know I wasn't the only one struggling to pay for the basics. I paid my April rent with some cash, beads, pelts and my baby teeth. I was feeling less stressed now. I guess I was getting use to living this new way, although the infection and death rates were sky rocketing and that was hard to digest. Surprisingly the CARES Act was passed, giving businesses financial support and giving millions of Americans a stimulus check of \$1,200. I got my money but it felt weird to receive a check while thousands of Americans had died. I took the money because I was broke but it felt odd.



Outdoor walks on Venice Beach in Los Angeles glves Monica positive energy.

Even though all parks, recreation centers and beaches were closed, I still was able to do my outdoor walks in my Venice Beach neighborhood, giving me needed positive energy. I was able to feel the healing vibes of the butterflies and the beautiful flowers that were coming alive in this unusual Los Angeles Spring.

As April was coming to an end, people—mostly white people—were protesting the stay at home order. They gathered in public places, some with guns, demanding their state be re-opened. If these people were Black or Brown, they would have been arrested or worse, shot. White privilege, white supremacy—even during a global pandemic. Chingao!

My first performance during this challenging time

was a virtual Zoom show titled: Queero de Mayo, a comedy show on Cinco de Mayo featuring queer Latinx comedians. This genius event was produced by the brilliant comedian Marga Gomez. Everyone was in need of laughs. The audience tipped us through our PayPal and Venmo accounts because as I said earlier—we all lost our performing gigs for this year. We experienced: community, love, familia, hope, church and charity that felt so nurturing. With my tips, I was

able to pay half of my rent for May. This production was important for the comics and the audience; we all needed each other.

I'm sure by now you all know my two performances that were supposed to happen at the Esperanza at the end of March, were postponed. At this time we don't know when I'm going to perform but mark my words, I'm going to rock the house. I'm going to create the biggest joteria hoedown with my show: I'm Still Here.

Please stay safe. Wash your hands. Wash your patas. Peace. Venmo: @Monica-Palacios-26 See you soon at Esperanza! www.monicapalacios.com!



Diana Rodriguez (1951-2020)

I want to acknowledge the passing of the dynamic trailblazing Diane Rodriguez on April 10, 2020, after complications with cancer.

Diane was a force in the American Theater and Chicano Theater. Rest in power Diane and party in the sky!

