

# CAPTAIN TRUMP ON THE TITANIC

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Trump is like the captain of the Titanic and we are the passengers. The Titanic was the largest, most advanced and powerful ship of its time. The captain was so filled with the hubris of its invincibility and so obsessed with its power that he set the ship at full throttle on its maiden voyage to break the cross-Atlantic speed record, despite the dangers of icebergs in its course through the North Atlantic. He could not stop the huge boat in its accelerating momentum as the crew saw too late the danger in its path. When the boat hit the ice, the ship was not prepared to handle the catastrophe and prevent the disastrous loss of life that ensued.

The warning signs of the coronavirus were known in December, when Dr. Li Wenliang discovered the virus in his clinic in Wuhan City and issued a warning to colleagues. The Chinese authorities accused him of spreading rumors over the Internet and disturbing the social system in China. Dr. Li was forced to sign a government memo condemning him for illegal behavior and for spreading false information. He was arrested. The warnings were at first kept quiet by the Chinese who did not want the world to know of the disease. They thought they could keep it under control, but the attempt to suppress the whistleblower and the virus failed. The spread of the virus could not be contained, and the warning went out to the world. The momentum of the contagion quickly got out of hand. Dr. Li himself was infected and died in the hospital on February 7, as the pandemic was spreading worldwide.

Meanwhile, Trump ignored the warnings, scoffed at the science, and previously in 2018, had defunded and broken down the entire government pandemic response chain of command put in place by the Obama Administration precisely to monitor the warning signs, prepare for, and respond to such a pandemic. Now the Trump administration was completely unprepared. In his hubris and ignorance, the President insisted that the situation was under control, and that it was a Democratic “hoax.” “The risk to Americans remains very low,” he proclaimed and further stated, “we’re very, very ready for this. It’s a little like the regular flu that we have shots for. And we’ll essentially have a flu shot for this in a fairly quick manner.”

His misleading remarks, lacking fact and empathy, brought public panic in the face of the reality, while businesses began to suffer, the virus spread, and the Stock Market plunged. As

the various world governments attempted a response without US leadership, the economies and health of the world began to sink like the Titanic. Now the pandemic continues to spread exponentially in the US and worldwide, and every day the death rate continues to rise as the news gets darker and darker.

How is it that the greatest and richest country in the world cannot provide enough personal protective gear for our nurses, doctors, and medical workers, who, at the front lines of this pandemic, are in danger of catching the virus and being immobilized themselves? Then who will take care of the tsunami of the sick with a shortage of health workers and hospital beds as has happened in Italy? How is it that respirators, ventilators, and the all-important test kits are in very short supply or not available at all? It sounds a lot like not enough lifeboats to save the panicking passengers from drowning in the icy waters, as the captain and crew scramble desperately for a way out of this, while the great ship goes down beneath them.

The crisis grew bigger than the President's hubris. He could no longer blame it on the Democrats, or Obama, or Hillary, or on the media and fake news. His psyche needs a target to blame, however, to deflect attention from his own inadequacies. So he has called the disease "the China virus" invoking the vitriol of the Chinese and further condemnation for his blatant racism. His adversarial trade-war approach to dealing with China at a time we need all the data we can gather, all the help we can muster, is ill advised and self-defeating.

To his credit, he did begin to step aside and let the experts explain the depth and stark realities of the situation, and to mobilize the late starting but much-needed response. But bailouts are only a band aid in the holes of the hull. Now we must hope and pray that Trump's response will slow the pandemic and eventually ease the arc of the disease. And we must all do our share to support the effort. But there is another danger lurking in this crisis.

In the mobilization to combat the pandemic, the president has now declared himself "a war-time president" and has invoked The Defense Production Act. Through this wartime act, the president is directing private industries to manufacture the urgently needed medical equipment along with the protective gear, at a hyper-production pace. While meeting this imperative, he has mobilized the National Guard and is engaging the Army Corps of Engineers. These may be effective and necessary steps, but also portend to inevitable enforcement of

Martial Law. This can fit directly into the president's continual quest to consolidate his power, to assume dictatorship, and further the demise of democracy. Under Martial law, should it be enacted and continue into November (God forbid), while we are all sheltered in place for the good of our own health, it would not be surprising to see the president attempt to postpone or cancel the election and try to continue in power, emulating his role model, Vladimir Putin.

But there is another alternative to this speculation. Unlike the Titanic, we are not doomed. As we are now all forced to partake in the social distancing and containment directives brought upon societies worldwide, we have the opportunity to pause from the acceleration of these drastic measures in this drastic time. We can reflect and reconsider who we are and how we function together in our nation and on this planet. We can mobilize our collective activism to defeat this disease, and, absent from marching in the streets and meeting in person, mobilize online to defeat the madness of this presidency.

We are the receivers of a most serious ongoing warning that transcends boundaries, cultures, nations, races, and politics. As we come together now and take the steps of battling this coronavirus, and as we hunker down in our own domains, let us see this as a chance to reverse direction and change course. Although we will bear the weight of increased suffering and loss, of economic hardship, especially those of us towards the bottom of the food chain, and face the haunting uncertainties of the daily developments, the virus is uniting the planet in the collective activism of the global community to save ourselves. We will get through this.

While the Coronavirus may well have derived from animals openly slaughtered, cleaned, and sold in the "wet market" of Wuhan, seemingly removed and far away deep within the culture and boundaries of China, it is symptomatic of a deeper disease we are called to recognize – blindness to the truth of our global interconnectedness and interdependence. The Coronavirus might have been contained, if the whistle blower had been heeded at first, if the warning had been put out sooner, and the proper preventative steps had immediately been taken, both in China and here. We are suffering the consequences of that blindness. Now we see that we are all in this together as a global people and can only solve it through global recognition, collaboration, and cooperation. For the first time in history, the will of the whole world is being forced to come together to pool our scientific, economic, environmental, social, and political resources to face the dilemma of our collective disease.

We must use this crisis to amend our ways, heal, recover, learn from, and see beyond this pandemic. As we go forward into the future, this disease-catalyzed collaboration and cooperation must now become the health-induced new norm for our planetary survival on all levels of societal endeavor. The world as we have known it has stopped, and we can use this crisis to restart our engines based on a rebuild and overhaul of all parts.

We can no longer be warring and embattled nations, tribes, religions, and factions built around the old model of walls of separation, exclusivity, of domination, colonization, and imperialism, of racism and sexism, of tribalism, enmity, and the divisive battling of competitive wills. We can no longer be debt slaves to the worldwide war economy and banking system which create economic disparity and injustices, and which support an adversarial, violent, weapons-based international culture that breeds contempt, mistrust, and the insanity of nuclear madness. None of this is healthy, nor sustainable.

We can no longer treat our planet as an endless resource pool to plunder and desecrate, and as a garbage dump for our toxic waste, enabling the collapse of nature's biodiversity. We can no longer deny the existential threat of the climate crisis. We must make the same unified global effort as in our battle with the pandemic, by being Earth Stewards, mobilized towards eco-justice, conversion to renewables, and to sustainability, now before it is too late. We can no longer be drugged and mesmerized by the material values of monied interests concerned more with greed and profit than with people's real needs and rights. All of us on this planet are inextricably intertwined, and we can no longer ignore the interdependent health concerns and wellbeing of the planetary population.

The current captain of the vessel of the most powerful nation in the world, Donald Trump, seems only concerned with his ego, wealth, and the public perception of him as a great king. He acquired the helm through the antiquated dysfunction of the electoral college system, with help from Russian interference, despite losing the popular vote by over 3 million. It is this current captain who espouses ultra-right wing nationalism, is disparaging to our allies, is a white supremacist, denies science, is preoccupied with his wall, is a womanizer, violates the Constitution, and hob-nobs with dictators and despots while giving tax-cuts to the ultra-rich, furthering the demise of democracy into a corporatocracy. It is the current captain who denies climate change, withdraws from the Paris Accords, and does all he can to support the fossil fuel industry while

desecrating the environment. It is the current captain at the helm who denies responsibility for his blindness to the danger that was fast approaching and for the stunning lack of preparedness for the calamity now taking place. The list of his corruptions, lies, and crimes is only exceeded by his total ineptness to meet the challenge of the Coronavirus pandemic.

We must see this as a time of extraordinary and challenging transition, of healing and rethinking, of embracing a new paradigm where interdependence, cooperation, honest dialogue, respect across differences, peaceful co-existence, non-violence, and earth stewardship are the pillars of a new global identity. We must embrace change and delete what no longer serves us. We must pray for our President, our nation, and the world. We are all travelers together on this spaceship Earth, spinning through space in a fragile life-support bubble like an orbiting incubator. Now is the time to wake up, heal, regroup, and learn how to keep the life-support systems on board afloat, operational, and healthy.

We must pray, but we must also act. We can no longer allow ourselves to be victims of suicidal policies led by a madman at the helm of an inherited system that is broken. We are better than that. We need to see that we are not this disease, we are not this dysfunction. We are divine beings born here to share this world in peace with each other, to embrace our journey towards health and wholeness of body, mind and spirit, and to grow and to blossom “endowed with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Unlike the passengers on the Titanic, as we get through this crisis, we have the opportunity to mobilize our activism, to correct our course, and to continue that pursuit across the ocean of our challenges, towards a new future with a new captain and crew at the helm, come November.