

The year 2020... It has already turned into a cliché, a meme, another typical thing to say - "2020 has been awful!" Personally, 2020 has ruined many plans for me. I had scheduled time off of work to visit my family. My friends and I had planned a trip to Yosemite. We had also bought tickets to see the Killers live. Of course, none of these plans ever took place because before the year even started, the pandemic had begun its destruction.

I remember thinking "All *my* plans are ruined! Why does this have to happen to *me*?"

I cannot believe how selfish I was to conjure those thoughts. I realize now, after 200,000 Americans (and counting!) have perished from this pandemic, just how inconsiderate, selfish, and narcissistic my thoughts were.

If there is anything I have learned in 2020, it's how we, as a neighborhood, community, state, and as a nation, can work together for all our sakes. It's actually amazing to see food drives still thriving, PPE being offered for free, and all the other goodness of humanity in America. At the same time, it's also troubling to see how politicized the pandemic has gotten.

I would like to remind people, from the bottom of my heart – most sincerely, to put aside political preferences. The pandemic itself is not a political issue. Might I pose this question – when you hear rough sounds coming out of your car engine, who might you contact? Yes, a mechanic. Likewise, our medical professions – our doctors and physicians – should be our primary resource for information and clarify when it comes to the pandemic, not someone who holds political office.

I appreciate this time I have to reflect upon this issue. It is time that I have... and that you have... but unfortunately this very time *we* both have, 200,000+ Americans do not. Let us think about our families, our friends, and other loved ones. I leave you with this magnificent quote by the late Mr. Fred Rogers:

"In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers."

May God be with you and God bless America!