
CHECK MY PRIVILEGE

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THE PANDEMICS HIDDEN BLESSINGS

BY KRISTIN GROSSI

When the pandemic became more serious in America in March 2020, I had just started my first class back in college at ASU online. I received my Associates degree 16 years before, and now I wanted to improve my job opportunities by getting a Bachelor's degree. I didn't know it was the beginning of such a life changing year for me and the world.

I was born a female 3rd generation white American in Southern California. I was not raised with religion, but my parents were very strict and disciplined. What I didn't realize is that I have been brought up with Eurocentric Christian morals and beliefs with a side of American Nationalistic mythology. My experience from the pandemic has been a huge change in my worldview.

In California, we have had stay at home orders pretty consistently since March 2020. This has given me much time to watch the news, documentaries, movies based on true stories, read MANY books, and dive down Youtube and Google rabbit holes (becoming extremely engrossed in a subject and linking subjects through multiple video and article searches).



I am a Religious Studies major and a Political Science minor (I added the minor after the pandemic encouraged me toward activism), so my professors have challenged me to take an objective academic standpoint of my subjects. This has forced me to examine my own subconscious beliefs, and for that I am grateful.

My first view into the American mythology through Covid was the mask protests at the beach in Huntington, CA. "Liberty" and "My rights" were the words from the protesters' mouths. I was personally shocked that wearing a mask and not being able to go to the beach were the concerns of these citizens when many people were dying or sick with Covid-19 causing permanent damage each day.

How could they be so selfish? How could they claim this as an impediment of their liberty as if it compared to taxation without representation or living under Nazi Germany dictatorship (which was on one of the signs of a protester)? And why does it always seem to be connected with the support of Trump as our president?

Recently I read an article in the New York Times, 'Christianity Will Have Power', that explained the support of Trump by midwestern Evangelist Christians. The perspective of some of the interviewees was understandably small because they seemed to have always lived in their small town with others of the same race, religion, sexual orientation, beliefs, goals, etc. Life is easy and makes sense to them in this context. Their understanding of the Christian bible has led them to believing homosexuality is a sin, abortion should be banned since they are pro life, and a woman should be submissive to her husband. I am not here to judge these life choices. What I saw in the article I had not recognized before is that these specific people don't see discrimination on this basis as discrimination at all. They see it as religious freedom. They keep all of these influences out of the world as practicing their religion. What they don't see is that they are impeding on others freedom of religion and basic human rights at times. When Trump speaks to them claiming that Christianity is under attack and he is going to bring it back into power, they see someone who understands and fights for them. I understand that it is difficult for a very diverse culture to get along and everyone to be happy, but that is part of our growth as humans.

The most important thing I recognized were some unconscious beliefs that underlie much of American culture. Work hard in a specific way, otherwise you are undeserving. White Europeans and our independence were the start of America. This is a country of religious freedom. People of color just don't work hard enough or are criminals. Again, I want to reiterate that these are not my beliefs, but I recognize that these color so much of what happens in this country whether you believe it or not. I have heard the term "decolonizing" your mind. I have been given this gift, and I have this year to thank.

It has been the perfect storm. A pandemic, racial police violence leading to an anti-racism movement, a presidential election, among many other events. Even though there has been terrible and highly stressful experiences, I feel hope that this is the chaos before the beautiful change. I may not be alive to see the results of this time, but I am going to work as hard as possible to see these changes through to the end. What I now know is that arguing my beliefs at another person (a fighting style that many have used on social media during this time) is rude and futile. What I can do is study people, cultures, religions, etc. When I can come to others with understanding and openness, we can have real growth. I am very blessed because I have not had to experience covid or racism myself. If you are studying this period in history, you will see "check your privilege" mentioned. This is my privilege. I get the luxury of studying these subjects in my beautiful home, safe and healthy.

Check out the New York Times article:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/09/us/evangelicals-trump-christianity.html>