



Telling Our Stories: Western's Response to COVID-19

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Story contribution

I have been lucky enough to financially survive the pandemic (thus far) and so my experience with the pandemic has been centered much more on the social and political aspects than on the economic aspects. I have never really been a social person; I've never gone out of my way to speak with people, and whatever friendships I had before the pandemic were the product of years of social interaction - those friendships are gone now. After nearly 3 years of social isolation, I find myself immeasurably lonely and socially starved for perhaps the first time in my life. I've gone through a political awakening and mellowing; going from a relatively left-leaning moderate to a full blown communist to a more relaxed socialist. I've learned much about the world during the pandemic, and that knowledge, coupled with considerations of where I want to end up in my life and my current political ideology, has changed my plans on traveling substantially; primarily in that I now wish that I could live in a country that provides more reliable social safety nets for its citizens. I feel a sure purpose to my life now, but every time I begin to believe that things might work out I'm reminded of the social isolation I still endure. For the first time in my life, I desperately want social connection, it is a new pain that I haven't felt before. I suspect that other people feel the same way I do, but with the physical and subconscious social restrictions that accompany mask wearing and social distancing, it seems that people are far more hesitant to talk to each other - self included. I hope that future generations - should this type of societal upheaval occur again - can look back to these records and know that there are those that feel and have felt their pain, and that no matter how alone they might feel, they are loved and cherished. I hope that they will not allow the pain they feel now to keep them from enjoying their lives. There is no such thing as wasted time, there are only missed opportunities.

End of contributed text from Brandt Shelden