



Virus, politics leave optimism in short supply

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I made it through the summer of COVID-19 — though I'm thankful that neither I nor any of my family have contracted the novel coronavirus. I know that the summer doesn't technically end until Sept. 22, but I got through June, July and August.

It wasn't easy for me or anyone.

Every Monday, I went on a diet to lose my "COVID 19" — as in the 19 pounds I put on during March, April and May — because by every Friday, I slipped back into the bad habits I'd developed during the spring.

What a blur the spring months were. I remember being shuttered in my house all day long, every single day. Thank goodness my consulting contract wasn't canceled — I've been working on a communications project for a medical company — and I was able to keep busy during the day.

But I went stir crazy every night. I took a lot of naps. I watched a lot of movies. I consumed a bit more wine than normal — box wine — which, apparently, lots of others did.

According to USA Today, Americans began consuming inexpensive box wine not by the glass, but by the bucket.

I stumbled through the spring months, but I managed to get through them with high hopes for the summer. I hoped warmer weather would help kill, or at least slow, the dadgone virus, allowing us to get back to some semblance of normality.

How naive.

After this summer, I'm not sure the normal I'm referring to — when people could disagree with each other's politics yet remain civil — will ever return.

I remember the awful George Floyd video in late May that resulted in initially peaceful protests. Briefly, America was galvanized. We all wanted better police training and vetting. Now, riots and lawlessness are nightly occurrences in various cities. Statues are being torn down. Businesses are being burned. Capitalism, the alleged cause of all things wrong in America, is under attack. And many people, myself included, aren't clear how initially peaceful protests morphed into what's happening now.

Our politics get nastier by the day. People get into other people's faces over the political candidates they support. They interrupt restaurant diners. They pull down political posters on private property.

Come on, America! That's not who we are.

It's no wonder, according to a recent Cato Institute survey, that 62% of Americans are afraid to share their political views. What a shame that in our country, which champions free speech as one of our most important and valued rights, millions of citizens are afraid to exercise it.

Meanwhile, old COVID-19 chugs along. I didn't think America could get more divided — but, again, I am awfully naive.

People who argue that we overreacted to COVID-19 are slugging it out on social media with people who say the second wave is going to be plenty worse. “Unfriending” has become the No. 1 activity on Facebook, to be sure.

All I know is that I somehow endured the spring of COVID-19, then I somehow got through the summer of COVID-19. The way things are going, though, the autumn of COVID-19 is looking to offer more of the same.

I'm already on my way to the grocery store to stock up on a few boxes of pink zinfandel.