


Substantial Disruption



The Week That Went: February 23-28, 2020

By Mike Tully

How was your week? If you haven't died or gone broke, congratulations. It's been quite a week on our small dysfunctional planet and I decided to put down my Sharpie and write about it. I was using the Sharpie to draw fangs on my respiratory mask to use when the plague finds its way to Southern Arizona and I want to cut in line. The mask makes me look like a surgeon channeling a piranha. They'll scatter like flies at Walmart.

The week began with the tenth debate in the race for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. The panel was expanded to include Tom Steyer because white billionaires were underrepresented. The chief moderators were Gayle King and Norah O'Donnell of CBS News and it went something like this:

“GK: Good evening and welcome to the tenth Democratic presidential debate. I'm Gayle King.

NO: And I'm Nora O'Donnell. This evening's debate also features questions submitted over the Internet. If you have a question you would like us to ask one of the candidates, just go to Twitter and use the hashtag #clusterfuck2020.

GK: Our first question is for former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg. Mayor Bloomberg, why do you believe it would be a mistake to nominate Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders?

MB: Because he's a godless Communist who likes Fidel Castro and honeymooned in Russia and Vladimir Putin wants him to get the nomination because Donald Trump will beat him like a rug.

GK: Senator Sanders, do you have a response?

BS: Yes. Get off my lawn, you mealy-mouthed homunculus!

GK: Senator Warren.

EW: I have a plan for that. Clean green lawns all across America. We'll pay for it by taxing rich people's gardeners.

GK: Vice-President Biden, do you have a comment?

JB: Listen, here's the deal. (Pause)

GK: Uh, what's the deal?

JB: I forgot.

GK: Senator Klobuchar?

AK: If we spend the next four months arguing over lawn care Vladimir Putin will spend the next four years defoliating it.

GK: Mr. Steyer, how do you react to what Senator Sanders had to say?

TS: What's a homunculus?"

Those are pretty much the highlights. The eleventh and final debate is scheduled for March 15th in Phoenix. It will be boisterous, unless the coronavirus hits Arizona by then and health authorities lock out the audience. That would be a drag, although I admit watching the candidates argue while wearing respiratory masks would be a new level of entertainment.

Speaking of coronavirus, the other big story not only went viral, it is viral. Americans are worried about coronavirus, but fortunately our Commander in Chief is on top of things. "(W)e've had tremendous success," Donald Trump declared at a news conference on Wednesday, "tremendous success beyond what people would have thought." He celebrated the tremendous success by designating Vice-President Mike Pence with the unenviable task of leading the nation's response to the pandemic. Pence declared that he will defeat the virus with conversion therapy and prayer. "The coronavirus is not acting as God intended," intoned the man who resembles a walking Q-tip. "We will pray it back to China, or wherever it came from."

The stock market had dropped faster than Trump's pants in a teen pageant dressing room, but Trump assured the media it was not because of coronavirus. The actual culprit, he insisted, was the Democratic presidential debate. "I think the financial markets are very upset when they look at the Democratic candidates standing on that stage," he opined. The market was so spooked by the Democratic debate that it recoiled the day before it happened. But Trump is optimistic. "I think the stock market will recover," he said. "The economy is very strong." The next day the stock market validated Trump's optimism by falling another 1,200 points.

During Trump's press conference the first instance of "community spread" occurred in California. A seriously ill woman was diagnosed with coronavirus. She had not traveled out of the country and had no known contact with any person believed to be infected, but contracted it anyway. Then a whistle-blower reported that infected patients had been flown into Travis Air Force base, not far from where the woman lives, and that health workers without proper training or protective gear were exposed to them. Since the virus is an airborne pathogen that spreads easily, it's not hard to imagine an infected health worker taking a lunch break, or shopping at a mall, all the while unknowingly contaminating the surrounding air. The Trump administration apparently invited coronavirus into the country and set off a chain of infection that is untraceable and unpredictable.

It's time to pray for a miracle and, lo and behold, the President promised one. "It's like a miracle," he declared to a White House gathering Thursday evening, "it will disappear." Economic Advisor Larry Kudlow downplayed the stock market's death spiral. He characterized the plummet as "a short-run correction" and added, "we've been through this many, many times

before.” Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney told a CPAC audience how to calm the markets. “I’m like, ‘Really what I might do today,’” he told the throng, “‘is tell people turn their televisions off for 24 hours.’” I’m like, bummed that the White House Chief of Staff talks like a Valley Girl, but he might be right about the TV thing.

So that’s where things stand as I write this on Friday afternoon. The Democratic race mimics The Hunger Games and the stock market remains in free-fall while a dangerous virus makes its way to America and the Trump administration addresses it by telling us to turn off our television sets and wait for a miracle.

Damn. My Sharpie went dry.

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