

Courage & Vulnerability: Corona & the Wisdom of Elders by Parker Palmer

In every crisis of my life, learning has helped me find my way thru. That means paying attention, allowing myself to feel as well as think, looking at things from different angles, gathering the best info available, trying to connect the dots, and “living the questions” when the answers elude me.

That’s why I love this excerpt from T.H. White’s novel “The Once and Future King,” based on the legend of King Arthur. The wizard Merlyn, who’s been entrusted with educating the young Arthur, is speaking to the future king at what we’d call a “teachable moment.”

As Americans and world citizens, we’re at a teachable moment called “pandemic,” and I’m trying to learn. Here are a few things I’m learning at this moment—a moment in which I hope and pray for the well-being of all. Please let us know what you are learning:

I’m learning more about some personal dynamics. I’m re-fighting old inner wars between fear and faith, self-reliance and seeking help. As some of the fallout from this crisis comes my way, instead of asking “Why me?”, I’m relearning to ask, “Why not me?”

I’m learning more about the good hearts of people who reach out in ways that reflect our shared humanity. I’m touched by those who ask, “How you doing? Any way I can help?”, and clearly want to know.

I’m learning more about millions of people around the planet who are in a “high-risk category” every day of their lives—not because of age or health, but because of race, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, or poverty. They live in non-stop pandemics of racism, sexism, nationalism, homophobia, structural economic inequality, and armed conflict. I now have a tiny window to glimpse a bit of their experience for a little while. May I learn all I can, and may my learning stick.

I’m learning more about people who, until a few weeks ago, railed against “Big Government” and what they call “Socialism.” Now they’re demanding federal intervention on every level—from healthcare, to corporate bailouts, to fixes in the “free” market that will save their 401Ks. Do they see what happens to their “convictions” when THEY, not the dispossessed, are at risk? When their personal storm passes, will they remember the way they flipped, or will they flip back?

I’m learning more about what it means, to quote Merlyn, to “see the world around you devastated by evil lunatics.” Devastation doesn’t always happen with the murderous swiftness of 9/11. It can begin with little things that go unnoticed, such as #45’s decision in 2018 to eliminate the NSC’s pandemic response team, which would have come in handy a few months ago.

Why would a leader fire experts that way? From words spoken and actions taken over the past three years, the answer seems clear: “Certain things stand in the way of Making America Great Again, including Big Government, the Deep State, science, facts, hard questions, truth-tellers, and dissenters.” So no one should be surprised by the fact that #45, when asked why he did it, said: “Nasty question.” “I know nothing about it.” “I don’t take responsibility for any of it.”

If the buck doesn’t stop THERE any more, I guess it stops HERE—with We the People, who have a chance to learn enough from this crisis to right the Ship of State and get it back on course. May we come thru the storm, and may we learn from it.

For more inspiration join us in conversation with Parker Palmer this Thursday April 9th on Courage & Vulnerability: Corona and the Wisdom of Elders. More details and RSVP info [here](#).