

Approved JB
(Initials)

Untitled
by John Barrett

Freedom, what is it? Who is it for?
I used to think it was me but I don't anymore
I thought Americans were free
But I found out that they're not
If freedom were free I'd have some
But freedom costs far more than I've got
I've heard speeches about freedom
But everything they said was wrong
I've heard people declare they're free
But then say "Well I've got to get back home"
I think only the insane are free
Imagine it if you can
The insane care for nothing
Neither woman, child or man
They care not when, if or what they eat
Even if its their own shit
They'll beat their head against a wall
And not know how to quit
They'll hurt you or themselves equally
With absolutely no remorse
They'll take whatever is there
They'll care nothing for the source
So, stop and think it over
Think very carefully
I'll ask a simple question
Do you really want to be free?

LEMON WEDGING 19

O, Miami Poet Laureate Eduardo Martinez

Wake Up-Wake Up-Wake Up!

Corona is coming!

Corona is coming!

can't hit the snooze button on this alarm

it's a global roster count

an attention of attendance

quarantine is something a prisoner knows well

Covid-19 sounds like another D.C number to me

so CDC's paying tariffs to the

panic panic panic panic pandemic

but *WHO's* going to fund this picnic

the President might emerge

as economic Christ in this crisis if he jumps in to the treasury

like Scrooge McDuck and cuts those relief checks

and i heard God doesn't have answers

Google does

it's just something about a search engine that gives us drive

but no keys

just a hot topic of push start button conspiracies

got us wondering what politicians have in their wallet

short selling foreknowledge

26 dollar barrels of oil

headlights off/brake pedal gone

playing chicken with the stock market

there's nothing *Charmin* about the single sand paper ply prison provides

if they could they'd have us picking *Cottonelle*

i saw *Purell* run from a jail cell

the first time i spit the phlegm of the condemned

crazy how overpopulation is a relevant question now

but not the overcrowded penal system

this vital virus has gone viral

over 204,000 hits

even though the flu's a mistress and Measles lead the league

and bullets made death cum quick last year

but records eventually get broken

fast hard short strides to the finish line

Corona is coming! Corona is coming!

you can wash your hands off of that fact

but one percent is one percent

and the fear of Corona rises daily

by tomorrow we'll all be scared to death

America *The-Rapist* (spell check correction: *Therapist*)

influenced by influenza

with a mind to undermine inside info

they'll screw the whole planet

a real global nympho

patient zero wore a Made In China label

but was delivered to Wuhan in Ford America tough fashion

somewhere off in the distance you can hear truth laughing

Economic Warfare

at the end they'll cash in

Corona caper making paper

vape nation was preparation for inhaling chemicals
now our elders are at risk
grandma at a nursing home and family forbidden to visit
sort of like a prison
survivalist screaming apocalyptic
this wasn't written it was scripted
watch how the power gets shifted
there's a lot of different ways to define this sickness
to keep the media encrypted
Made In America
checking off its wish list
Congress clairvoyants
it was all predicted
so stay safe don't become a statistic
ironically social distance is keeping us together like kids on a field trip
We Are The World lets all sing along to the remix
different circles coming together entwined like Olympics
we all gotta heal the world that's always been the pretext
deep in our hearts we all share one suspect
quick to sign off on our gut checks
you're a hostage situation if you come out positive on your check
it's a respiratory attack so don't wait 'til your last breath
cause life doesn't come with a reset she's a bartender that's upset
with a tip jar full of all seeing eyes and pyramids
so when she takes your order
and hands you lemons instead
Wake Up! Wake Up! Wake Up!
and kiss the lips of a Corona with them
or hit the snooze button again
. . .*but I suggest you open your eyes*

Corona State of Mind
-- Gustavo Guerra
(revised 03.28.20)

The virus is spreading. Thousands of confirmed cases. Cemeteries are being overwhelmed. Italy. Spain. China. Iran. New York. Miami. All on lockdown. Just like us. Anxieties about the outside world - especially my elderly parents - visit me at least once a day. The rest of my time is divided in adapting to the changes in my own life (washing my hands for twenty seconds 10-15 times a day, greeting people with elbow-bumps, holding my breath as I walk by prison staff) and agonizing about what is going to happen if someone gets infected on this compound.

There are no testing sites here. Institutional staff are not checked for a fever or questioned about flu-like symptoms when reporting to work. I've asked them. Yet, despite expert recommendations and municipal orders, they gather in groups of twos, fives, even tens to gossip and socialize to my dismay. Staff cannot realize we will not know they have infected residents until it is too late. In this setting, the virus will spread like - well, a virus.

Our medical facilities are not prepared to handle the magnitude of what I see on television very day. You might think that they will have to send us to an outside hospital, but consider the logistics. Every prisoner that goes to outside medical must be escorted by two correctional officers at all times. The institution's available staff will be quickly depleted after seven or eight residents need medical attention. Then what will they do?

When men get sick here it will be too late.

But, I worry about how this will affect me. Is that a little bit selfish? While society is concerned with having a job to return to when this is over, I am thinking about when volunteers will be allowed to return to the institution so I can continue my classes. People outside want to return to beaches and restaurants and movies theaters; I just want to lift the suspension of our gavel club. The one we self imposed because we felt the administration was not being proactive enough.

Three days ago two county correctional officers tested positive for covid-19. The same day, our administration shut down all programs: chapel, education and library. They began to feed us quad by quad, forcing us to sit two to a table. Why? These men live in the same quad. They use the same phones, the same drinking fountain, the same showers.

I think segregating us by quad for all movement is an excellent idea. However, the

effort is defeated when security gives residents the choice to either return to the dorm or go to the recreation yard until the compound has been fed. They enforce social distancing on men living together and then invite them to go to the recreation yard with the rest of the compound. They either don't take it seriously, don't care, or don't get it. And this frightens me. These are the people in charge of my safety.

The irony is that there are activities I would continue to participate in given the chance even considering the risks. I decry the Department of Corrections' reactive nature while bemoaning the activities I have lost. It has only been three days and I miss my friends, my brothers. I cannot call them on the phone or write them an email like the public can just to check up in them. I miss the myriad activities we participated in together. God only knows when I will be able to see them and have an intelligent conversation about writing again.

The truth is that the activities I filled my schedule with had been carefully balanced to include personal growth, community involvement, and recreation: classes, clubs, executive committee meetings, newsletter creation, speaking engagements, writers' groups, workshops, even planning and practicing for a licensed TEDx event that has now been canceled.

Finding purpose while serving a natural life sentence has been difficult. These activities gave me purpose. Being involved kept me positive and helped me maintain my sanity and subsequent sobriety. And the thought of a drawn out quarantine frankly makes my blood pressure rise and brings tears to my eyes, even as I type this essay. This whole pandemic scares me. I fear for my family. I fear for my friends. And I fear for my state of mind when this is finally over.

In the meantime, I continue to hold my breath when I am forced to walk by a gaggle of officers. I wash my hands and sing the ABC's until I finish (it's a 20 second song). I read books and trade them off in the quad for another one. I watch and listen to the news and I worry. And at the end of the day, I write. Because writing allows me to regurgitate my anxieties on a blank page, thus helping me manage my fears. At least until the next newscast which will feed this ever-present corona state of mind.