

# THE VIKING REVIEW

## Graduation Edition



## A NOTE FROM THE (FORMER) EDITORS

Kenny Boggess & Lia Fourakis

Dear East High School and beyond,

Since the school year has now drawn to a close, we, the co-editors of The Viking Review, have now officially completed our tenure with this publication. Though we are sad to part ways with The VR and with you all, we would be remiss if we left without a final goodbye.

The Class of 2020 entered this world in the wake of the unforgettable tragedy of 9/11. It then began high school in the throes of a notably tumultuous presidential election. Now, it leaves high school in the midst of a global pandemic, accompanied by bold calls for societal reform in the face of inescapable tragedy. It is undeniable that the voices of today's youth are more necessary than ever in the dialogue of our country. As your editors, we have striven to bring out the voices of East on hard-hitting topics, offering a way for students to hone their writing skills in pieces that highlight their understanding of the world and their unique perspectives on the events unfolding around them. The past four years have seen some truly astounding developments in politics, technology, pop culture, and beyond, and all of us have witnessed some monumental changes in society that, we are sure, will be echoed in history textbooks for generations to come. During all of these developments, it has been a distinct honor and privilege to serve as your editors, watching some of East's most prolific writers put forth their takes on global events with the support of reasoning and critical analysis.

Though we are moving on from our time at East High School, we leave you all with The Viking Review in good hands - In fact, most likely in better hands than ours. Julie Rostock and Daniel Cheng are qualified, talented, and bright individuals, and we hope that you will give them the same warm response you gave us.

Finally, as we leave you all, we would like to remind you one last time that the world is vast and large, but not incomprehensibly so. It is as crucial for you all to keep informed as it is to eat, sleep, and breathe, and we can both say without a doubt that East has some fantastic minds who make every effort they can to stay informed, and all of you have the potential to change society for the better. So, keep questioning the world around you; Keep researching, learning, growing, and sharing; Keep seeking out answers to the biggest question that you can ask: "Why?"

And, of course, keep it up with those sudoku puzzles, since this school has some pretty sharp puzzle solvers... Maybe you can even beat Mr. Lindsay's times!

With admiration, gratefulness, and a tinge of poignancy,

Kenny Boggess & Lia Fourakis, former co-editors of The Viking Review

## PUBLIC HEALTH

### CORONACATION: *FOREVER?*

Abhi Suresh

Before you continue to read this story, I just want to say how appreciative I am for having been able to write for the *Viking Review* these past four years. Covering music, culture, health, and science, I have been able to express my opinion on subjects or even just merely attract attention to them or plague the readers' food for thought. To me, the most exciting part about journalism is the beauty of language and its ability to cause a conversation. From the stories I have written, I have been able to strike up discussions with teachers, students, and other individuals. I love hearing the variation in opinion, and the thinking behind it. As this is my last piece for the *Viking Review*, I ask you, the reader, to recognize your ability to ignite change, and to be kind, and to be authentically you. :)

This story is both a continuation and update of the previous coronavirus story written by myself in March, at the beginning of quarantine.

#### **Time Flies**

I don't know about you, but my time in quarantine has meshed all the days together. Somehow, we have made it to this two-month mark, and all of a sudden March has morphed into May. In the same amount of time, we have learned of new preventative measures towards the coronavirus, seen the death toll rise, and waited patiently for Governor Wolf to tell us when we can go back outside, and hopefully to normal.

#### **The Phases**

After the peak of the coronavirus wave, states began to wonder how exactly they should approach this undetectable enemy. In Pennsylvania, Governor Tom Wolf has decided to use a three-tiered phased matrix system to decide the state of a county and whether or not it can reopen with social distancing and universal masking guidelines. The three phases include red, yellow, and green - and no, you can't speed through yellow in this case.

**Red:** Stay at home order, essential services, restaurants, and bars take out only, life-sustaining businesses only, life-sustaining travel only.

**Yellow:** Aggressive Mitigation, outdoor dining is allowed, schools can provide in-person educational services, telework must continue where possible.

**Green:** A new normal; decreasing occupation of public areas including movie theatres, restaurants, gyms, and salons, strong encouragement of continued telework.

While we wait for a vaccine, these precautions are necessary, although suffocating. Depression and anxiety have skyrocketed during this time - over a third of Americans are now facing these problems. Loneliness can increase the severity of these conditions. If you have been affected mentally and/or emotionally during this time, please do not hesitate to reach out for help.

***Websites, Links, and Phone Numbers: Take care of yourself!***

<http://www.arcofchestercounty.org>

<https://members.ccbh.com>

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>

<https://mentalhealthrecovery.com/wrap-is/>  
<https://pmhca.wildapricot.org>  
<https://www.nami.org/Home>  
<https://www.mhanational.org/im-looking-mental-health-help-myself>  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

***Suicide Prevention (Please note, if you are suffering severely or in need of immediate help, call 911):***

National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>  
<https://afsp.org>

### **Effects of the Virus**

As the peak of this wave of coronavirus subsides, new data is becoming available on symptoms, signs, and effects of coronavirus on the body. One recent study in Germany looked at autopsy data and found strong correlation between pulmonary embolisms and the unsuccessful resuscitation of three out of four patients. However, the small population of the autopsy study indicates that this data should be taken with caution and since it is smaller and less comprehensive than a study would be usually, the need for data triumphs size at this time. Another study in Germany reported that the lungs or pulmonary vascular system were identified as the cause of death in a 12-patient group, with a median age of 73, who suffered from at least one pre-existing medical condition. This was also an autopsy study, and the lungs were found to be heavy and congested. Again, this study took place in one center and is subject to selection bias regarding who went under autopsy and who did not. Although, both of these studies point towards the suspicion that thrombotic events (massive pulmonary embolisms and fresh deep venous thrombosis) are critical aspects of the coronavirus.

The prominence of blood clots in the lungs has also been found in an LSU study that reported that 10 African American victims who lost their life to coronavirus had blood clots in their lungs. (This also relates to tensions in the African American community regarding the virus and its impacts, but I'll let the others deal with the politics.) D-dimers, markers that tell us the body had been working to break down these blood clots, had been found in the victims. Fat tissue activates inflammatory chemicals, so doctors are looking closely at obesity. COVID-19 generates even more inflammation, which can result in the formation and acceleration of blood clots. This may also be why patients collapse suddenly and/or experience shortness of breath. Doctors also weighed unknown genetic variables and any pre-existing medical conditions (including if they had not been diagnosed with one).

Moreover, as states reopen, the economy has slightly improved, with the unemployment rate decreasing from 14.7% (the highest its ever been) to 13.3% in May. Economists are *amazed* by this change, as predictions indicated that the unemployment rate would soar to 20%. For reference, the unemployment rate is the number of people unemployed divided by the number of people in the workforce. The value excludes discouraged workers. Many workers who received a stimulus check in addition to weekly unemployment insurance benefits contributed to a rise in personal income, even as joblessness soared. However, there is optimism as states begin to reopen, and restaurants and other non-essential services still see demand. The Congressional Budget Office predicts the economic impact of the coronavirus will be both sharp and long-lasting. Real gross domestic product is expected to be 3% smaller over the next ten years, and

after this initial sharp recession, a bull-run is expected, then a period of steady growth (the square-root model).

The following is an interview that I hope gives you some insight into the coronavirus. I wanted readers to understand the first-hand experience of the coronavirus and while physical distancing is hard, it is necessary.

### **1. Who are you?**

My name is Una, and I'm 18 years old. I live in Reykjavik, Iceland, and I was diagnosed with COVID-19 about a month ago (in Late March, this interview took place at the end of April).

### **2. What has been your experience with the coronavirus?**

My symptoms never got that intense. I mostly had heavy breathing, headaches, and I felt very weak and tired. The worst part of it, though, is how long it lasts. For me, the symptoms go very up and down. Some days I'll feel very tired and have a sore throat, and some days I'll be energetic but have a heavy chest. It seems to be pretty random. I never had much of a fever though!

### **3. Have you been tested? What was the testing process like?**

Tests are free and very accessible here in Iceland, and for that, I'm very thankful. It's also good because it means that our numbers and data here are very accurate since anyone can get tested. My dad had just gotten back from New York so we all (my family) decided to get tested since he had a bit of a cough. His test came back positive but ours didn't. About a week later my mom and I had started developing symptoms like a head cold, a tight chest, and sore throats. We got tested a second time 2 weeks later and were diagnosed with the virus.

### **4. How did the coronavirus test feel?**

It's the worst!! They swab you twice, once in your throat, and once all the way into your nostril (like until you feel the swab hitting a wall). It feels like it's in your brain! It's over very quickly, though, so It's not at all too bad. I did have nosebleeds after the second test, though. My right nostril was very tired of it. But, all in all, I'm insanely thankful for the tests!

### **5. What was it like going to a hospital during the coronavirus outbreak and as a coronavirus patient?**

In Reykjavik, they built an addition to the hospital that was exclusively for COVID-19 patients. My doctor advised my mom and me to go to get our vitals checked out since we had heavy breathing for so long. We never saw any other patients since the examination room had only one door that opened from the outside of the building. I think that helped with my anxiety. They checked our breathing, oxygen levels, temperatures, blood, and blood pressure. Everything came back normal, so we got to go home pretty soon. They had a really nice private waiting room with two Lazy Boy chairs that we got to sit in while we waited for our blood work!

### **6. From your perspective, how difficult is it for doctors and nurses on the front lines?**

I think that Iceland is the best place to be in these times. There is a whole team of doctors, nurses, and nutritionists who make daily phone calls to all of those in the country who are infected. I get calls every other day, asking me how I am and how I feel, both mentally and



physically. I'm extremely thankful for those people, and for all the healthcare workers working on this pandemic. People are risking their lives to help others, and if that isn't one of the most difficult things in the world, I don't know what is. I can't imagine the anxiety and just general difficulty that healthcare workers are experiencing in these rough times and I am beyond thankful to be able to be where I am while this goes on.

### **7. As far as your experience, how contagious is the coronavirus?**

My mom and I seem to have gotten it from my dad. After he tested positive, he used a mask and stayed in his room. Later, he went into isolation in a different apartment. My mom and I thought we had escaped it, but we tested positive around 2 weeks later. We were around my brother a lot, even after we tested positive, but he never got it! We take good care to sanitize all the surfaces, doorknobs, and screens here, so I guess that's been very useful! We call my brother 'The Chosen One' as a joke since he managed to avoid getting sick. xD

### **8. Is there anything else you want the public and people of our age (teenagers, late teens) to know?**

In Iceland, it is now illegal for more than 20 people to be in one place. Anyone who has come in contact with someone who tested positive has to, by law, be in quarantine for 2 weeks. These rules have been extremely effective here in Iceland, so I hope others will understand their importance elsewhere. For us teenagers, the symptoms are not too bad. It's mostly similar to a boring, long, flu, and there is no reason to be afraid of getting it if you're an otherwise healthy teenager. Nevertheless, we should all be careful, and stay home as much as we can, both for ourselves and for those who may be at risk. *I also can't stress enough how important hand washing is!!!* I feel like my mental health has been just as affected by the virus as the rest of my body, so keeping my mind happy and healthy has been important for me these past weeks. Our mental health is just as important as anything else, so let's take care to prioritize the things that truly bring us joy, whether that be baking, reading, watching movies, what have you! I'm positive that this will pass, but following the proper rules and practicing a better-safe-than-sorry mindset will definitely make it go by a whole lot quicker.

Again, coronavirus is not going away. It's up to us to practice social distancing measures, wear masks, and wash our hands to prevent the spread of the virus. Una's interview reiterates the importance of precautionary measures from keeping the coronavirus from spreading. It's been a pleasure writing for the Viking Review, and this is Abhi Suresh, signing off for now.

#### Sources:

1. <https://www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19/#RedPhase>
2. <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
3. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/K12/Pages/default.aspx>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>
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7. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/danvergano/coronavirus-tips-spike-loop-protein-symptoms-death>
  8. <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/04/how-does-coronavirus-kill-clinicians-trace-ferocious-rampage-through-body-brain-toes>
  9. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1)
  10. <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/5/21281388/us-economy-jobs-added-may>
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## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

### CORONA IN WAR-TORN COUNTRIES

Ayman Bootwala

#### Iran

Iran had been dealing with one of the worst coronavirus outbreaks in the world with more than 2,200 people dead. Not only does it not have the infrastructure that the U.S. has to deal with the crisis, but U.S. sanctions made it hard for the country to receive aid from private organizations and other countries. Doctors without Borders and a French aid organization known as MSF set up a 50-bed inflatable treatment center in Isfahan but were removed as the Trump administration continued to increase sanctions. The group eventually gave up trying in Iran and have moved onto different countries in the region. Mara Karlin, a former Pentagon official that now works at John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies said that many countries, non-profits, and businesses are afraid of helping Iran because they do not want to face the U.S. sanctions themselves or jeopardize their connection with the U.S. financial system.

#### Gaza Strip, Palestine

In Gaza, the health care system is almost non-existent due to years of isolation and conflict. The coronavirus could wreak havoc in a population such as this, with 2 million people living in cramped cities and refugee camps. Although Gaza has not seen an outbreak like other countries around the world have, it is most definitely not prepared for one. The territory has 62 ventilators, of which 15 are in use for non-coronavirus patients. Abdelnasser Soboh, one of the directors in the World Health Organization, says that the Gaza Strip will need at least 50 more ventilators in order to handle the first 100 cases of coronavirus patients if they come gradually. If they have an outbreak like other countries, Gaza will break.

#### Syria

In Syria, the civil war is now on its tenth year with no signs of stopping. Just like Iran, U.S. sanctions have made matters worse by stopping potential aid that could reach the country. Since the outbreak began, major Syrian officials have pleaded with the Trump administration to lift the ban so that they could receive aid, but there has been no change. Syria also has to deal with an awful health care system and rampant poverty: most of its citizens will not be able to pay for an extended hospital stay due to the virus.

## Libya

Rival parties have been at war for years, displacing hundreds of people around the capital Tripoli. But the parties have put their feud aside and worked together to shut down non-essential business and services. The main concern for Libya is how they are going to protect 50,000 refugees and migrants from other countries that currently live overcrowded detention centers.

## Yemen

Yemen is unique from the other countries in that it is suffering from two disease outbreaks. One is obviously the coronavirus, but since 2016, the country has been dealing with a cholera outbreak that infected 2 million people and has killed around 4,000 in Yemen. Combine these two diseases with the current 5-year civil war and you have a recipe for destruction. According to the World Health Organization guidelines, there are only two facilities in the country with 29 million people where people can be quarantined and diagnosed with the virus.

Even though these countries are politically, economically, and in general are worse off than the United States, they are still social distancing and are staying at home.

Sources:

1. <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/03/26/822121907/iran-needs-help-to-fight-coronavirus-but-delivering-aid-is-a-challenge>
2. <https://time.com/5808071/coronavirus-gaza-syria/>

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## POLITICS

### A BETTER WAY TO VOTE

Julie Rostock

If you followed the 2020 Democratic primaries, you may remember the turbulence of the race surrounding Super Tuesday in March. Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, and Tom Steyer all suspended their campaigns right before the biggest night of the primary, consolidating most of the moderate vote around Joe Biden. Elizabeth Warren, however, remained in the race for a few more days, despite her lack of success at the polls. During those few days, Warren was urged to drop out and endorse Bernie Sanders, who shared many of similar plans but had far more support. A heated argument between Sanders' and Warren's supporters lasted for days, with Warren supporters claiming that Warren didn't owe other candidates anything, and Sanders supporters claiming that Warren's refusal to drop out reflected her lack of commitment to the platform that she was running on. So who was right? It's true that Warren suspending her campaign was the best move for the progressive agenda. But it shouldn't have been. There is a better way to vote, and it's more civil, more productive, and more democratic.

Ranked choice voting is a system in which voters rank candidates in order of preference, instead of selecting only one. It differs from first-past-the-post voting, America's current system, where voters can only select one candidate. Fundamentally, ranked choice voting is built on the idea that the winner of an election should not be the candidate with the most first-place picks, but the candidate who most voters *prefer* over other popular candidates. So far, it has been



implemented in some municipalities in nine U.S. states, and the state of Maine plans to use it for the 2020 general election. More states should move to adopt ranked choice voting for both primary and general elections.

In a ranked choice system, voters can rank candidates in order of preference, with the voter's first-choice candidate first on the ballot. Votes are tallied using only the first-choice rankings. If any candidate wins more than 50% of the vote, they are declared the winner. If not, the last-place candidate is eliminated. Then, every ballot that had the eliminated candidate as a first choice is recalculated, and the second-choice votes from those ballots are used instead. This process of recalculation repeats until a candidate wins 50% of the tally. This means that the candidate who eventually wins is preferred by the majority of voters over any other candidate left in the race.

Ranked choice voting works to mitigate many of the most prevalent issues in first-past-the-post voting. The spoiler effect, also known as splitting the vote, occurs when two or more candidates run on a similar platform, causing voters to split between those candidates. This usually creates election results that don't accurately reflect the views of the majority of voters: the winner is the most popular candidate, not necessarily the most popular platform or agenda. In reality, the name on the ballot is arbitrary compared to the policies that that name represents, and our voting system should represent that. Ranked choice voting would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the policies Americans want.

In addition to more accurately measuring where voters' support lies, ranked choice voting would lead to more productive campaigning. Right now, because of the spoiler effect, it's beneficial for a candidate to run negative advertisements or attack candidates who are similar to them in terms of viewpoints. Because voters can only choose one candidate to vote for, the goal is to be the only candidate running on a certain platform. Instead, we should strive for a system that incentivizes candidates with similar views to consolidate their support and work together for their shared agenda. This doesn't mean that voters wouldn't have to choose a preference between similar candidates, but it does mean that that preference wouldn't harm the shared platform. Ultimately, this change would lead to more productive and issue-oriented campaigning, rewarding meaningful debates about policy over more personal attacks.

In the last few months, the importance of early voting and vote-by-mail procedures has been made clearer than ever. These systems increase voter turnout and give more people a chance to vote, regardless of their circumstances or schedule. However, with first-past-the-post voting, early voting and voting by mail are risky. A lot can change in the days between early voting and regular election day. Specifically, on Super Tuesday this year, people who voted for Buttigieg, Steyer, or Klobuchar early essentially lost their votes when those candidates suspended their campaigns. Ranked choice voting would ensure that early votes and votes by mail aren't wasted. It's a little optimistic to suggest ranked choice voting as a way to adapt the 2020 general election to COVID-19, as changes like this one likely can't be made that quickly, but voting by mail and early voting are always important options, regardless of the circumstances.

So far, these examples have been mostly geared toward primary elections, but ranked choice voting would be just as beneficial, if not more beneficial, to general elections. As we've seen in the last few years, an increasing number of Americans are unsatisfied with both of the major political parties. The number of third-party or protest votes in 2016 was relatively high, and it's likely that the 2020 election will be similar. The problem is that it is incredibly difficult to return from the two-party system that American politics are stuck in without fundamentally changing the voting system. It's nearly impossible for any third-party or independent candidate to

win a general election, and voters know this, but voting Democrat or Republican can feel like voting against the candidate you hate more, rather than voting for a candidate you like. The majority of third-party voters have some preference between the leading candidates, and we need to factor this preference into the election process. It must be possible to demonstrate support for a third party without completely throwing away your vote. Without this option, the election process will only become less and less democratic over time.

In an article entitled “Ranked Choice Voting is a Bad Choice,” the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, lays out a series of arguments against ranked choice voting that range from manipulative fallacies to genuinely valid criticisms. The first of the poor arguments that is often used against ranked choice voting is the idea that by placing a candidate anywhere on your ballot, even last, you are potentially helping them win. This idea that ballots are plugged into some complex mathematical equation that corrupts your vote is a blatantly false argument used to manipulate those who don’t understand how the system works. The slightly more complicated nature of ranked choice voting is used to paint it as an unfair scheme to manipulate our elections. Ranked choice voting is simple: unless all the candidates above them get eliminated, no candidate that you rank below first place gets any support from you.

The most common form of ranked choice voting also allows voters to opt out and only select one candidate, or only rank a few, though they run the risk of ballot exhaustion. Ballot exhaustion is another perceived risk of ranked choice voting where if all of your candidates are eliminated from the race, your ballot is exhausted and you essentially have no say in the election. According to the Heritage Foundation, “a ranked choice election will, in the end, boil down to only two opposing candidates, but many voters (not knowing how the roulette wheel will spin) will not cast ballots between those two choices. That voter ends up with no say in the contest between the final two candidates in the black box elections governed by ranked choice voting.” This argument fails to consider that this is quite literally an exact description of the faults of the *current* American voting system. Ranked choice voting gives voters the opportunity to avoid ballot exhaustion, whereas first-past-the-post voting automatically exhausts all ballots without a viable first-choice pick.

While there are a few unfounded criticisms of ranked choice voting, there are also some valid concerns with how this change would affect our elections. The most common concern is that by adding any complications to the voting system, we run the risk of decreasing voter turnout. This is a genuine risk, which is why any changes to the voting process must be accompanied by readily available information before and during the election to anyone who may not be familiar with the new system. If executed properly, ranked choice voting would likely increase turnout among voters who have lost faith in the election process. Alongside other voting reforms, ranked choice voting would work to expand American democracy into a more inclusive and representative process.

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## Staff

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*“Write what you know. That should leave you with a lot of free time.”*  
 - Howard Nemerov