

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.22.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, May 22, 2020 9:19 AM
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Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.22.20

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 5 Cars 5 Trucks 2 Bicyclists 1 Dog walker No school busses (Early walk time)

At some point today, Minnesotans will discover the latest addition to the State Fair line-up. I imagine it will be called, "Disappointment on-a-Stick". I also imagine that there will be another one or two additions to the line-up this year including "Anger on-a-Stick" and a much smaller stand featuring "Relief on-a-Stick". For those not familiar with the Minnesota State Fair, almost everything you could digest is sold on a stick—from "Apple Pie on-a-Stick" to "Fried Pickles on-a-Stick." For 12 glorious days each summer, from a Thursday until Labor Day itself, the great Minnesota Get-together unfolds on a sacred piece of property that brings people from across the state and the nation to walk its hallowed grounds. I imagine that this won't be happening this year—unless the fact that already 20 County Fairs have been cancelled and numerous other summer celebrations ended is proven to be inconsequential to the State Fair Board [this morning](#) when they meet.

Yesterday, the paper from the city on the other side of the river was running an on-line poll as to whether or not the Fair should be held. Initially, when I briefly checked [at 830 AM](#), the poll was running 65% no and 20% yes and the rest asking for the decision to be postponed until a later date. By the time I looked [at 5PM](#), the numbers were running just about 50-50 with those favoring having the Fair slightly outnumbering those who thought it should be cancelled this year. Like everything else about dealing with a global pandemic, we are discovering that self-interest often trumps communal health over and over again. Don't get me wrong, I love the State Fair. Since 1986, when Phyllis and I took a 2-month old in a stroller through the Fair until last year, the Fair was not to be missed. In truth, that is not quite correct. For me, my Fair attendance was dependent on the Jewish calendar. If Rosh Hashanah was earlier in September, it often meant that the closest I got to the Fair was a gift of a few Sweet Martha's cookies (certified Kosher no less) as a gift upon my family's return. But the Fair did represent one of the last great gatherings of people that were all treated alike.

As many of you know, I have often railed against the modern sports facility for its stratification of society by the seating arrangements it promotes. (Full disclosure-I exempt Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Nebraska and the great seats that my friend Rich E. has often provided me when I attend a Cornhusker game). Sports use to be a place where the banker would be sitting in the bleachers next to a butcher. But when folks realized that club seating and luxury boxes and suites could be used for making business deals while watching a game, the bleachers became places for the "bums" and the

suites became places for the powerful. Like almost everything else in America—from neighborhoods to schools to organizations—economic stratification is evident at every turn we take. I am not any different and I am a player no differently than almost all of you in this economic game that has destroyed the common shared space of society one step at a time. And that is why the Great Minnesota Get-Together not happening this year is really a shame. Not because it's the wrong call to make—but because it is actually the right call to make and it will only further inflame the passions and the divide inside our society.

Walking through the streets of the Fair, you see a Minnesota walking together that you never see anywhere else. You realize that Minnesota is not a homogenous blend of Scandinavians or people with ancestors simply from Western Europe, but a multi-cultural state of folks all seeking the good life that it has to offer. Dressed in shorts and t-shirts, wearing sandals or sneakers may be that Bank President or First Responder—you simply don't know. What you do know is that there are still folks who perfect the craft of bread baking and whose accomplishment is rewarded with a Blue Ribbon that is proudly displayed. The seed art this year will be missed and, yes, the one place where diversity still has not reached—the Princess Kay of the Milky Way --will not have her face sculpted in a block of butter in the Dairy Building. The ears of corn that are normally eaten and the milk and beer and wine that is consumed will take a rest this year. And the hucksters—what will they do with their vege-matics and ginsu knives to sell? And the Midway and the “Miracle of Life” barn where urban folks can see animals being born up close and personal—it is not happening this year.

It is a loss and the disappointment that will be felt should not be dismissed. What I worry about, and what I fear will happen, is that once again an important decision made for the public's health will be treated as an opportunity to engage in “grievance politics” so artfully practiced by too many in this country. In the absence of shared public spaces, this political art form only grows and grows. It will heighten anger on both sides of the political divide and further push people away—ironically as a result of having the cancel the one place where people can all gather. There are no easy solutions to this divide inside our country—but what I do know is that the loss of one of the few common spaces that brings us together is not a good thing—even if it is the right call to make. We will stomach our Disappointment on-a Stick this year—but I would suggest that it behooves us all to seek out places where we might see the “other Minnesota” than the one in our neighborhoods. Visit a restaurant in a neighborhood you rarely venture into, drive the backroads in counties you never visited, shop at a business in a community far from your zip code. We can't replace the great get-together—but we can be players in being reminded of what makes the fair so important--the people, all of the people, on the streets themselves. We owe it to one another to keep that piece of Minnesota alive this summer (and every day). Morris (no writing on Mondays observed as Holidays—I just made that rule up) Shabbat Shalom

Sent by my iPad