

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.12.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
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To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.12.20

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 4 Cars 5 Trucks ISD#197 School Busses 1916 and 1914(going in opposite directions) 4 walkers and 1 Dog Walker

Albert Camus captured the imagination of young, privileged high school students in the early 1970's. His "Myth of Sisyphus" spoke to the absurdity of world in which he lived and by extension which he imagined that all humanity must live in. Even his philosophical soul mate, Franz Kafka came in for criticism for offering a glimmer of hope where none should exist. High School education during the turbulent 60's was a mixture, at least for me, of painful insecurity in relationship to the "in-group" of the Lincoln Country Club set, intermingled with a class here and there that was exciting to walk into and more engaging as the hour went on. Reading the Myth of Sisyphus was one of the highlights of my high school years (which ended early so I could get a semester of college at Nebraska before leaving home). It clashed with everything my parents were trying to impart to us kids and it clashed with my own beliefs in living a fairly observant Jewish life as a teen in Lincoln. But it remained for me a counterpoint to all of that and more—and probably allowed me to have something to debate my father with at the dinner table. By those years, the burden of engaging my dad in debate fell to me as his other interlocutors had already flown the coop. But I digress...

I thought of Camus and his writings today as I saw my favorite bus pass Phyllis and me on our walk(she was counted in the census). (Maybe because she was with me, my mind raced back to high school—who knows) Here is the quintessential Sisyphian myth bus driver going back down Wagon Wheel Ave every day [around 655AM](#), only to return the following morning at the same time and almost at the same place on my walk. And that's when it struck me—which one of us was more like Sisyphus—me or him? Does he think about the absurdity of seeing this middle-aged man walking every day back up Wagon Wheel Ave and imagine to himself-how absurd of a life is that guy living? I don't know—to the outside observer we are somewhat locked in a shared path of absurdity up and down Wagon Wheel itself.

The question is, of course, when will this pattern come to an end? For me, this shutdown has been not only strange and disconcerting—but if truth be told—filled with purpose and design. I have taken back control of my life, am eating much more healthily, exercising consistently and producing at work effectively. I miss the office banter and the day to day interaction with folks in communities around the district, but these days haven't been filled with despair about my life—only about the world in which we are living. I have followed closely the Caring Bridge sights of those whom I know

have been infected and hospitalized, mourned for the world's casualties—including the over 80,000 Americans who have succumbed—after having been told by our President that it would be gone by April. But for my life, small as it is these days, I have not found it meaningless or hopeless or even absurd. [This morning](#), however, as I saw ISD #197 bus 1916, I couldn't help but think this can't go on forever. And of course, that is the thought that dominates all of our lives at this moment.

When will you be comfortable taking that first step outside the comfort zone of being in a shutdown? Some folks, unimpressed by the science or the facts, have taken those steps already. The anger-filled scenes of screaming folks wearing swastika facemasks is something to behold. But while they may be an overstatement of the reality, they do speak to a feeling that many people have. How long will this situation persist and how long will it be before I am willing to take a reasonable risk in returning to the world—even with all of its precautions. When will you feel comfortable getting on a plane? While United Airlines made a statement that it was “protecting” middle seats, the picture that made the news rounds yesterday of a full plane load of passengers gave lie to that “promise.” I feel for Lark Toys in Kellogg or Spiral Brewery in Hastings. They are family owned small businesses that deserve to be seeing folks come into their stores and find joy in children's play and relaxation with an adult beverage. But am I willing to walk back in and begin life anew with a different tempo and style? I don't know. I do know that our kids are a tad bit more concerned about my decision making than am I. It is clear that this decision should only be driven by good epidemiological modeling. But epidemiologists don't control the political process anymore than does that bus driver. Dr Fauci is reportedly going to tell us today that there will be needless suffering and death if we open too quickly. For the time being, I am going to listen to him more than I listen to Mike Pence or Jared Kushner. Somehow, what may seem like absurdity and ceaseless walking up and down Wagon Wheel Ave looking for school bus 1916—may just be the exact opposite—it may indeed be the reason that life does have meaning and purpose. Morris

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