

Voters’ Moods:  
Tired, Anxious  
And Optimistic  
Betting on the Election  
as a Turning Point

This article is by **Lisa Lerer, Elaina Plott and Lazaro Gamio.**

Amanda Vibelius, a stay-at-home mother in rural Arizona, is angry and overwhelmed.

Her father is diabetic, a condition that cost him work because of the coronavirus. As cases skyrocket in her state, she’s nervous about allowing her 11-year-old daughter to join friends at the playground. And she has warned her husband, a doctor, that if he contracts the virus, she will kick him out of the house to quarantine.

But, like a striking number of frustrated Americans, Ms. Vibelius says she is also hopeful. A Republican-turned-independent, who is “leaning more and more Democrat every day,” Ms. Vibelius thinks a rebound may come quickly — as long as President Trump loses in November.

“It took too long to take precautions and it reopened too soon, and that’s why we’re getting these spikes,” she said. The country will come back, she said, “when we get rid of the current administration.”

Nearly six months after the first case of coronavirus reached the United States, a majority of registered voters say they are anxious, exhausted and angry, according to a poll by The New York Times and Siena College. Yet even as they brace themselves for months of challenges from the virus, many remain optimistic about the country’s future, viewing this moment of pandemic, economic devastation and social unrest as an opportunity for progress — one they can help shape.

The poll and follow-up interviews with respondents reveal an electorate acutely attuned to the ways in which the health crisis and economic hardships have seeped into their lives, and to the idea that the political process — and their vote — might improve things. The usual personality contests and ideological showdowns

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Cases Soaring  
As Leadership  
On Virus Fails

This article is by **Sabrina Tavernise, Frances Robles and Louis Keene.**

WASHINGTON — More than four months into fighting the coronavirus in the United States, the shared sacrifice of millions of Americans suspending their lives — with jobs lost, businesses shuttered, daily routines upended — has not been enough to beat back a virus whose staying power around the world is only still being grasped.

The number of new U.S. cases this last week surged dangerously high, to levels not ever seen in the course of the pandemic, especially in states that had rushed to reopen their economies. The result has been a realization for many Americans that however much they have yearned for a return to normalcy, their leaders have failed to control the coronavirus pandemic. And there is little clarity on what comes next.

“There has to be a clear coherent sustained communication, and that has absolutely not happened,” said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious diseases specialist at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. “We’ve had just the opposite and now it’s hard to unring a whole series of bells.”

There was “real hubris” on the part of public health officials at the very start, Dr. Schaffner said, that the United States could lock down and contain the virus as China had. That futile hope helped create an unrealistic expectation that the shutdown, while intense, would not be for long, and that when it was lifted life would return to normal.

That expectation was reinforced by President Trump, who has downplayed the severity of the crisis, refused to wear a mask and began calling for states to open even as the virus was surging. A lack of federal leadership also meant that states lacked a unified approach.

With no clear message from

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How the World Missed Covid’s Symptom-Free Carriers



LAETITIA VANCON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Dr. Camilla Rothe, whose team in Munich warned in late January that asymptomatic people could transmit the virus to others.

Doctors Said the Seemingly Healthy May Be Contagious, but No One Listened for Months

This article is by **Matt Apuzzo, Selam Gebrekidan and David D. Kirkpatrick.**

MUNICH — Dr. Camilla Rothe was about to leave for dinner when the government laboratory called with the surprising test result. Positive. It was Jan. 27. She

iting from China. And that colleague should not have been contagious.

The visitor had seemed perfectly healthy during her stay in Germany. No coughing or sneezing, no signs of fatigue or fever during two days of long meetings. She told colleagues that she had started feeling ill after the flight back to China. Days later, she tested positive for the coronavirus.

Scientists at the time believed that only people with symptoms could spread the coronavirus. They assumed it acted like its genetic cousin, SARS.

“People who know much more about coronaviruses than I do were absolutely sure,” recalled Dr.

Rothe, an infectious disease specialist at Munich University Hospital.

But if the experts were wrong, if the virus could spread from seemingly healthy carriers or people who had not yet developed symptoms, the ramifications were potentially catastrophic. Public-awareness campaigns, airport screening and stay-home-if-you’re sick policies might not stop it. More aggressive measures might be required — ordering healthy people to wear masks, for instance, or restricting international travel.

Dr. Rothe and her colleagues were among the first to warn the world. But even as evidence accumulated from other scientists,

leading health officials expressed unwavering confidence that symptomless spreading was not important.

In the days and weeks to come, politicians, public health officials and rival academics disparaged or ignored the Munich team. Some actively worked to undermine the warnings at a crucial moment, as the disease was spreading unnoticed in French churches, Italian soccer stadiums and Austrian ski bars. A cruise ship, the Diamond Princess, would become a deadly harbinger of symptomless spreading.

Interviews with doctors and public health officials in more than a dozen countries show that for

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Don’t Whistle on the Elevator. Don’t Even Talk.

By **MATT RICHTEL**

Kiss the elevator pitch goodbye — at least if it takes place in an elevator.

Change is coming to the daily vertical commute, as workers begin to return to tall office buildings in New York and other cities. The elevator ride, a previously unremarkable 90 or so seconds, has become a daunting puzzler in the calculus of how to bring people back to work safely after the coronavirus pandemic kept them home for months.

Employers and building managers are drafting strict rules for going up: severe limits on the number of riders (four seems to be the new magic number), designated standing spots to maximize social distance, mandatory masks, required forward-facing positions — and no talking.

Some companies are hiring elevator consultants to figure how best to get thousands of people to their desks, balancing risk of elevator density against a potential logjam as riders wait — at least six feet apart — for their turn.

Reflecting the widespread interest and concern, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention plans to weigh in as early as this week with guidance for elevators and escalators. For escalators, it will advise one rider every other step and hand sanitizer at the top. For elevators, it will recommend limiting the number of riders but won’t specify a number; arrows showing different paths to get on and get off; masks; and signs urging people to “not



TONY LUONG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Demonstrating new protocols at the Prudential Center in Boston.

talk unless you have to,” said Nancy Clark Burton, a senior industrial hygienist at the C.D.C. who is part of the group developing the new guidance.

The changes are the result of clear science. Covid-19 is most transmittable when people are in

tight confines, particularly indoor settings, where invisible droplets can travel from one person to the next, collateral damage of a seemingly innocuous conversation.

“The good news is: If you don’t like small talk in the elevator,

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Officer’s Goal  
To Fix a Force  
Derailed Fast

By **KIM BARKER**

MINNEAPOLIS — There were two black men at the scene of the police killing in Minneapolis last month that roiled the nation. One, George Floyd, was sprawled on the asphalt, with a white officer’s knee on his neck. The other black man, Alex Kueng, was a rookie police officer who held his back as Mr. Floyd struggled to breathe.

Mr. Floyd, whose name has been painted on murals and scrawled on protest signs, has been laid to rest. Mr. Kueng, who faces charges of aiding and abetting in Mr. Floyd’s death, is out on bail, hounded at the supermarket by strangers and denounced by some family members.

Long before Mr. Kueng was arrested, he had wrestled with the



VICTOR J. BLUE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A photo of Alex Kueng and his siblings when they were younger.

issue of police abuse of black people, joining the force in part to help protect people close to him from police aggression. He argued that diversity could force change in a Police Department long accused of racism.

He had seen one sibling arrested and treated poorly, in his view, by sheriff’s deputies. He had

found himself defending his decision to join the police force, saying he thought it was the best way to fix a broken system. He had clashed with friends over whether public demonstrations could actually make things better.

“He said, ‘Don’t you think that that needs to be done from the in-

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In Tik Tok Era, New Life for a Conspiracy Theory

By **CECILIA KANG and SHEERA FRENKEL**

WASHINGTON — Four minutes into a video that was posted on Instagram last month, Justin Bieber leaned into the camera and adjusted the front of his black knit beanie. For some of his 130 million followers, it was a signal.

In the video, someone had

posted a comment asking Mr. Bieber to touch his hat if he had been a victim of a child-trafficking ring known as PizzaGate. Thousands of comments were flooding in, and there was no evidence that Mr. Bieber had seen that message. But the pop star’s innocuous gesture set off a flurry of online activity, which highlighted the resurgence of one of social media’s early conspiracy theories.

Viewers quickly uploaded hundreds of videos online analyzing Mr. Bieber’s action. The videos were translated into Spanish, Portuguese and other languages, amassing millions of views. Fans then left thousands of comments on Mr. Bieber’s social media posts asking him if he was safe. Within days, searches for “Justin and PizzaGate” soared on Google, and the

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Thai Dissidents Vanish

At least nine activists living in exile since Thailand’s 2014 coup have disappeared in the past two years. PAGE 14

Tight Polish Presidential Race

Andrzej Duda’s re-election seemed certain before the pandemic forced a delay of the vote until Sunday. PAGE 15

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Made the World Brighter

With a colorful poster of Bob Dylan and an “I ♥ NY” logo, Milton Glaser changed American visual culture in the 1960s and ’70s. He was 91. PAGE 30

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An ‘Inappropriate Namesake’

Princeton will remove Woodrow Wilson’s name from its campus — four years after voting to keep it. PAGE 22

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Summer’s here, but Covid-19 is still a threat. Can you trust your loved ones to enjoy reopenings responsibly? PAGE 1

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Hearing Arkansas in the Pages

Donna Tartt on why Charles Portis’s novels beg to be read aloud. PAGE 1



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Patchwork Radical

A Berkeley museum show confirms Rosie Lee Tompkins as one of the great artists of 20th-century America. PAGE 10

A Small-Screen ‘Hamilton’

The film, a live capture of the hit musical, was fast-tracked to Disney Plus and will start streaming July 3. PAGE 6

THE MAGAZINE

‘It Is Time for Reparations’

If the country ever wants to achieve true justice and equality, it will have to repay what it owes to black Americans, Nikole Hannah-Jones writes.

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Germ-Free Chain Restaurants?

How Applebee’s, TGI Fridays and other franchises are rethinking the dining experience for people who fear the coronavirus — and one another. PAGE 1

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