



SEPTEMBER DAWN BOTTOMS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
The line outside an unemployment office in Fayetteville, Ark., last week, when another 5.2 million workers applied for benefits.

## Britain Bets On Test Kits, And It Loses

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK and JANE BRADLEY

LONDON — The two Chinese companies were offering a risky proposition: two million home test kits said to detect antibodies for the coronavirus for at least \$20 million, take it or leave it. The asking price was high, the technology was unproven and the money had to be paid upfront. And the buyer would be required to pick up the crate loads of test kits from a facility in China.

Yet British officials took the deal, according to a senior civil servant involved, then confidently promised tests would be available at pharmacies in as little as two weeks. “As simple as a pregnancy test,” gushed Prime Minister Boris Johnson. “It has the potential to be a total game changer.” There was one problem, however. The tests did not work.

Found to be insufficiently accurate by a laboratory at Oxford University, half a million of the tests are now gathering dust in storage. Another 1.5 million bought at a similar price from other sources have also gone unused. The fiasco has left embarrassed British officials scrambling to get back at least some of the money.

“They might perhaps have slightly jumped the gun,” said Prof. Peter Openshaw of Imperial College London, a member of the government’s New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group. “There is a huge pressure on politicians to come out and say things that are positive.”

A spokesperson from the Department of Health and Social Care said that the government had ordered the smallest number

Continued on Page A8

## Trump Says Governors Can Make Call to Reopen

By PETER BAKER and MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON — President Trump told the nation’s governors on Thursday that they could begin reopening businesses, restaurants and other elements of daily life by May 1 or earlier if they wanted to, but abandoned his threat to use what he had claimed was his absolute authority to impose his will on them.

On a day when the nation’s death toll from the coronavirus increased by more than 2,000 for a total over 30,000, the president released a set of nonbinding guidelines that envisioned a slow return to work and school over weeks or months. Based on each state’s

### A Reversal After He Insisted He Had Total Authority to Decide

conditions, the guidelines in effect guarantee that any restoration of American society will take place on a patchwork basis rather than on a one-size-fits-all prescription from Washington that some governors had feared in recent days.

“We are not opening all at once, but one careful step at a time,” Mr. Trump told reporters during a briefing at the White House.

Mr. Trump essentially gave cover to mainly Republican gover-

nors of states in the South and West that have not been as hard hit by the pandemic to begin reopening sooner. The president, who has previously said that as many as 29 states could reopen soon, told governors on a conference call before his announcement that some of them were “in very, very good shape” and could move further and faster to resuming economic and social activities.

If they follow the guidelines, New York and other states in the Northeast, as well as states in the Midwest and West, that have seen large outbreaks would remain shuttered until new cases of the virus and death tolls fall and hospital capacity is restored.

The guidelines envision pro-

Continued on Page A12



HILARY SWIFT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

### ‘I Need My Mommy’

Minnoli Aya, 18, used text messages to try to encourage her mother, Madhvi Aya, who succumbed to the coronavirus at age 61 after working in a Brooklyn hospital trying to save others. Page A16.

## Crisis Tamed, China Sees Outsiders as New Peril

By VIVIAN WANG and AMY QIN

HONG KONG — After 16 years in China, a Congolese businessman thought he knew what being black there entailed. He had been subjected to racial slurs and denied apartments, but he had also learned Chinese and made local friends. He loved the country; he called it his second home.

But the businessman, Felly Mwamba, had not anticipated the

### Displays of Hostility as Nationalism Swells

coronavirus pandemic, during which he would find himself sealed in his home, prohibited from leaving and eyed as a carrier of the disease, simply because he was African.

“The way they are treating black people, you cannot accept,”

Mr. Mwamba said by telephone. “We are not animals.”

As China tames the coronavirus epidemic now ravaging other countries, its success is giving rise to an increasingly strident blend of patriotism, nationalism and xenophobia, at a pitch many say has not been seen in decades.

A restaurant in northern China put up a banner celebrating the virus’s spread in the United States. A widely circulated cartoon showed foreigners being sorted

Continued on Page A7

## How Many Are Dead? Nursing Home Won’t Say

This article is by John Leland, Amy Julia Harris and Tracey Tully.

Berna Lee got the call from the nursing home in Queens on April 3: Her mother had a fever, nothing serious. She was assured that there were no cases of coronavirus in the home. Then she started calling workers there.

“One said, ‘Girl, let me tell you, it’s crazy here,’” Ms. Lee said. “‘Six people died today.’”

In a panic, Ms. Lee drove from

### Families Left in Dark About Conditions

her home in Rhode Island to the nursing home, beginning a two-week scramble for information, as workers at the facility, Sapphire Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing of Central Queens, told her privately that many residents had died, and that most of the

home’s leadership was out sick or in quarantine.

Finally, she banged on her mother’s first-floor window to see if she was OK. It was unclear whether her mother understood what was happening, Ms. Lee said.

“I didn’t know how bad it was,” she said. “People told me bodies were dropping.”

The crisis at Sapphire highlights not only the desperate state of nursing homes in the New York

Continued on Page A17

## BROAD SHUTDOWN PUSHES AMERICANS TO ECONOMIC EDGE

### In a System ‘With No Shock Absorbers,’ Basic Needs Are Suddenly at Risk

By PATRICIA COHEN

An indelible image from the Great Depression features a well-dressed family seated with their dog in a comfy car, smiling down from an oversize billboard on weary souls standing in line at a relief agency. “World’s highest standard of living,” the billboard boasts, followed by a tagline: “There’s no way like the American Way.”

The economic shutdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic has suddenly hurled the country back to that dislocating moment captured in 1937 by the photographer Margaret Bourke-White. In the updated 2020 version, lines of cars stretch for miles to pick up groceries from a food pantry; jobless workers spend days trying to file for unemployment benefits; renters and homeowners plead with landlords and mortgage bankers for extensions; and outside hospitals, ill patients line up overnight to wait for virus testing.

In an economy that has been hailed for its record-shattering successes, the most basic necessities — food, shelter and medical care — are all suddenly at risk.

The latest crisis has played out in sobering economic data and bleak headlines — most recently on Thursday, when the Labor Department said 5.2 million workers filed last week for unemployment benefits.

That brought the four-week total to 22 million, roughly the net number of jobs created in a nine-and-a-half-year stretch that ended with the pandemic’s arrival.

Certainly, the outbreak and attempts to curb it have created new hardships. But perhaps more significantly, the crisis has revealed profound, longstanding vulnerabilities in the economic system.

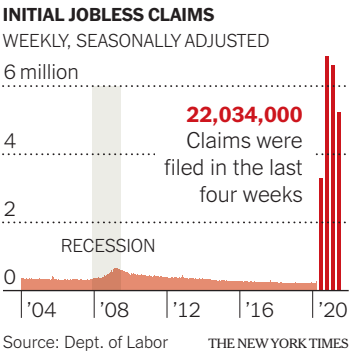
“We built an economy with no shock absorbers,” said Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel-winning economist. “We made a system that looked like it was maximizing profits but had higher risks and lower resiliency.”

Well before the coronavirus established a foothold, the American economy had been playing out on a split screen.

On one were impressive achievements: the lowest jobless rate in half a century, a soaring stock market and the longest expansion on record.

On the other, a very different story of stinging economic weaknesses unfolded. Years of limp wage growth left workers struggling to afford essentials. Irregular work schedules caused weekly

Continued on Page A10



## To Trace Virus, One State Uses An Old-Fashioned Tool: People

By ELLEN BARRY

BOSTON — Alexandra Cross, a newly minted state public health worker, dialed a stranger’s telephone number on Monday, her heart racing.

It was Ms. Cross’s first day as part of Massachusetts’s fleet of contact tracers, responsible for tracking down people who have been exposed to the coronavirus, as soon as possible, and warning them. On her screen was the name of a woman from Lowell.

“One person who has recently been diagnosed has been in contact with you,” the script told her to say. “Do you have a few minutes to discuss what that exposure might mean for you?” Forty-five minutes later, Ms. Cross hung up the phone. They had giggled and commiserated. Her file was crammed with information.

She was taking her first steps up a Mount Everest of cases.

Massachusetts is the first state to invest in an ambitious contact-tracing program, budgeting \$44

million to hire 1,000 people like Ms. Cross. The program represents a bet on the part of Gov. Charlie Baker that the state will be able to identify pockets of infection as they emerge, and prevent infected people from spreading the virus further.

This could help Massachusetts in the coming weeks and months, as it seeks to relax strict social-distancing measures and reopen its economy.

Contact tracing has helped Asian countries like South Korea and Singapore contain the spread of the virus, but their systems rely on digital surveillance, using patients’ digital footprints to alert potential contacts, an intrusion that many Americans would not accept.

Massachusetts is building its response around an old-school, labor-intensive method: people. Lots of them.

“It’s not cheap,” Governor

Continued on Page A11



INTERNATIONAL A19

### ‘There’s No More Water’

A delicate ecosystem was broken in the Comoros, off East Africa, when trees were cleared for farming.

### Unity Talks in Israel Falter

Lawmakers have just 21 days to form a majority government, or the country may have to hold elections again.

NATIONAL A20-23

### E.P.A. Weakens Mercury Rules

The Trump administration’s latest roll-back, which focuses on releases from power plants, may lead to loosened controls on other pollutants. PAGE A22

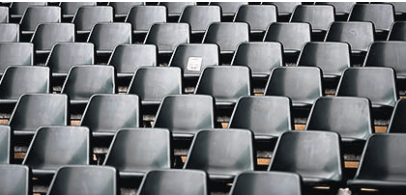
### Will the Internet Sink Biden?

The Democrats’ presumptive nominee is gaining little traction online. Kevin Roose weighs the risks. PAGE A21

OBITUARIES A24-25, 28

### Tony Award-Winning Actor

Brian Dennehy, whose career spanned more than 50 years in theater, movies and television, was 81. PAGE A24



SPORTSFRIDAY B8-10

### When Sports Might Be Back

Leagues face large, but not insurmountable, obstacles even to get games back on television. PAGE B8

### PGA Tour Plans June Return

Golf officials are preparing to restart the season by hosting a tournament in Fort Worth, without spectators. PAGE B9

BUSINESS B1-7

### A Pandemic of Poverty

The coronavirus crisis could hurt the American economy so badly that as many as 10 million people could soon join the ranks of the poor, Columbia University researchers say. PAGE B4

### China’s Economic Run Ends

The world’s second-largest economy shrank 6.8 percent in the first three months of 2020 as the country coped with the effects of the novel coronavirus that was first reported there. PAGE B6

EDITORIAL, OP-ED A26-27

### Paul Krugman

PAGE A27



WEEKEND ARTS C1-16

### A Solitary Point of View

Just as isolation became the new normal, a “loneliness story” by the author-provocateur Otessa Moshfegh is scheduled to be released. PAGE C1

