

## Jelisaveta Blagojević | #stayhomefree

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I do not write any diary, I have no good advice for the coming days, no fateful or encouraging thoughts, none of it. I believe I am going through a lot of mediocre stuff through this period: poor concentration, searching for answers, reading between the lines, hysteria, sadness, paranoia, and so it goes round and round. I sleep poorly, I'm bad when I'm awake even, but nothing worth mentioning. When I look at how we were crushed on all sides, I'm not so bad. There you go.

Now, mostly I have some questions.

A whole history of the struggle for freedom with all kinds of perpetrators, fools, and tyrants, the struggle for the critical consciousness of citizens who are capable, knowing, and who must recognize the dangers of the totalitarian and respond to it immediately: civil rights, women's rights, human rights of all those most deprived, for all these values many more people have given their life much more so than COVID-19 will ever be able to take, a mean little virus.

How is it possible to give it all up so easily? Not only have we given up all these things in a moment of fear for our own lives - as if living without them is a life worth living at all - but we are proud to be obedient, angry with those who are not, insulting and ridiculing them. Among them are those who have nothing but that very street they are banned from; those without money to stock up supplies for a few days. Among them are those whose long stay with family is

not the comforting feeling of staying "at home." Among them are those whose closest family are their pets. No, really, tell me, is this okay? Is it okay for us when this vile little virus takes its toll and when we "wake up" from this ugly dream we find ourselves in - *The Handmaid's Tale*? I'm not ok with it, I'll be thrown into the colony immediately, I am afraid. I won't panic, but I think I'm very close to that. That's what scares me.

It also scares me that I'm in a mental and spatial quarantine as the world changes. With more or less success, I work out various scenarios about how tomorrow will be - whenever and wherever it may be. From now on kissing and hugging will be a kind of luxury for which we are ready to pay with our lives, so that we will become really picky, no more scattering with touches, flaunting and "bodies [that] make displays of themselves," as Foucault wrote. Alcohol for hand sanitizing, not for drinking. Fat for making soaps, not for eating. Watching on TV or on Google any kind of massive gatherings when bodies are squished together as in protests or music concerts, for example, we will probably experience some kind of caesura, you know, like when we watch the *Mad Men* series and we see the characters smoke cigarettes on a plane.

Hey, what about smoking? Will it remain the greatest and most pernicious danger of the times we live in, or will those cages and quarantines at airports now start to serve as something else? For example, for those of us who did not wash their hands for thirty seconds at least, or have a temperature of over 38 degrees Celsius, or who hugged each other while waiting for departures? And in general, where are we going to travel? Will passports, visas, visa-free regimes, etc., from now on be enough to get out of the fortress-nations? I worry about myself, I have a thyroid disorder, excess weight, and high blood pressure (to mention just a few of my health issues) - will it allow me to travel and see my child in Sweden in the future or will new travel passports be obtained on the basis of medical records? That's what scares me.

Living in the Balkans, I belong to a generation that has not succeeded in its fifty-something years to connect ten years back to back under the same rules and the same "normality." All these states of emergency have always tried to make me cease being myself - my-

self as the result of various physical and social interactions, solidarities, named or unnamed communities, as well as relationships that I have imagined and invented.

And here and now, the state insists every day that it is my new family, every day it declares love to me or rather nervously and frightened yells at me or asks me to do or not do things.

And I don't like that new family, and I don't like how this family treats me, and I don't want to be a part of it; I want to stay free.

Stay at home but stay free.