

## SHELTERING AMERICANS

by Genny Lim

Sheltering Americans is like herding cats. When it comes to having a good time, there ain't no plague or science will keep a good gringo locked down. Americans are, after all, the original rugged individualists, the Paul Bunyans and Horatio Algiers, who conquered the West and made their fame and fortunes, not by doing what they were told, but by doing as they pleased. Better at making the rules, than at following them, they are known to resist any threats and flout any laws that infringe upon their perceived individual rights. If rules impinge on their personal freedoms, their habit is to bend or break them to accommodate their goals or purposes, pandemic or no pandemic. We in California, fortunately, are more civil and rational than many populations we're seeing across the country, like the menacing MAGA protestors armed to the teeth in paramilitary dress, violating state lock-downs, in spite of CDC projections of surges in states that have yet to curb their rising infection rates.

Compare our chaotic and economically-driven response to the pandemic responses of other countries, like China, South Korea, Thailand, Italy or Germany, which have all seen their infection rates go down after effective, strict lockdowns for several months, without capitulating to special interests or corporate demands. Even countries under US sanctions, like Cuba and Venezuela, have managed to arrest their spread of the virus with very limited medical supplies and facilities, while our infection rates continue to soar to almost two million and our deaths are over 110,000.

What's the difference? These countries have an organized national health response to the pandemic. We don't. Trump's pandemic plan is no plan. It's every state, county and city for themselves. Those countries' priority is to save human lives. Our government's priority, on the other hand, is to save the economy. Trump and his fellow Republicans are rallying Americans every day to go back to work to save America, even if it means sacrificing the most vulnerable citizens among us. Lt. Governor Dan Patrick said "Lots of grandparents are willing to die to save the economy for their grandchildren." Must Americans pay the ultimate price for Capitalism?

The national rhetoric flies in the face of what our responsible state and county leadership is doing here in California. It's created confusion, tensions and divisions across the country. There are those of us who are diligently still sheltering at home. At the same time, there are those who are fed up with San Francisco's Stay at Home Order, which only shifted to Phase Two this Monday, sending the floodgates prematurely open. Those reveling in the city's Mission Dolores Park and Marina District Bars over the weekend, jumped the gun and appeared content to ignore mandated protocols. It looked like a summer block party with mostly young white customers lined up, shoulder-to-shoulder along the sidewalk without a care in the world. They didn't seem concerned with flattening the curve to save their souls, let alone their grandmother's, immune-compromised neighbors or healthcare workers. No, that wasn't their problem. It's the Latin Xs' problem, the seniors' problem, the African Americans' problem, I suppose. They had too much to live for to be quarantined like prisoners. They're too young, too strong, too sexy, too whatever to bother with such nuisances as face masks or social distancing. Especially, after a couple of beers or margaritas when, as my friend Jon Jang says, "social distancing, six feet de-feet-ed, six feet looks more like six fingers."

The U.S. is living up to its reputation as the most unruly, reckless, undisciplined and entitled people in the world. They don't realize how uncool it is to throw caution to the winds and sand in the eyes of those who try do otherwise. I, for one, am not willing to sacrifice my life for the economy of the Charles Kochs, Jeff Bezos or Waltons.