



The Gulf Coast's Winds of 2020

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(Fam Med. 2021;53(10):896-7.)
doi: 10.22454/FamMed.2021.447940

Three winds approached our Gulf Coast in 2020
each with their own inherent, yet relative, slowness or haste.

One with perennial predictability.
Another soaked in entrenched bigotry.
And the last shaming us with centenary revelations
as a popularized and populist mindset disregarded contagion
and as a foreboding cicada freshly arisen from a cave of perpetuity.

Forecasts and record allow time for deliberate formulation
while there are also deniers eschewing objectivity and observation
“shelter in place,” “quarantine,” and “isolation” were used,
misused, abused, and confused
as a virus suffused defiant of our capability,
and also, our preparation.

And with discourteous and untimely outbursts
multiple tropical tempests amplified misery and battered us,
while simultaneously and indifferently
innate human biases started to shatter us.

Nine minutes, twenty-nine seconds nonplussed!
bewildered yet provoked shock and distrust!
from Minnesota to Sarasota
calling each of us out—where must we adjust?

Before a hurricane there is measure

Tick tock... tick tock.

We track the widening white impact cones on their headings
“which side of the collision am I on? “
right or left of the eye's center
likely determines which lives matter

Property lines, structural integrities (and failings)
some beach homes recently elevated on proper pilings
while others reside in trailer homes, in flood zones
propped up on blocks and low-lying.

Each is disparately plotted on the black and white ink
of a county registrar's estate blueprints.

From the Baldwin Medical Group, Foley, AL.

Social infirmities
are often less perceived as urgencies
as aftermaths poignantly demonstrate inadequacies
and post-mortems deeply query long-held priorities.

Trees fall on things
many things stronger and safer than others
which are perpetually damaged without reflection or correction.

Centuries-old, shaded limbs that once dangled strange fruit
some unrepentant, some irresolute
faced with hurricane winds, fell irrespective of rotten or rigid root.

First branches, then shingles, then roofs.
many defenselessly uprooted
by the Gulf Coast's winds of 2020.

The prevailing fronts of polarization and insular mindsets
defined the news options on ones' TV sets
and social media outlets became small minded
with one's self-affirming "likes" and inward-looking "rejects."

After a hurricane is when the most spiteful squalls come
with time-consuming deprivation and loss, people slowly succumb
to the languished tap of a cavalry drum
For many, "where is mine?"
And, "what is my sum?"

As incessant COVID-talk renders us both more familiar and indifferent to our frailties
further desensitized, and increasingly benumbed.
how scared do I need to be?
to protect us and me?

I am here! Yet to every threat, how near?
To whom should I listen and how do I hear?
As these tumultuous and extraordinary winds churn.

I hear some shout "peril in the air!"
others shame that as an ignorant error
zealously claiming no threat of terror.

I want to slay this modern-day Cerberus!
by bolstering respect and esteem for all of us, to all of us
to delay the claims by sectarians blustering, "*who has won?*"
and reclaim and rejoin, "*out of many, one!*"

I pray that is our heartbeat that I hear
that heartbeat which is recorrecting the metronome of history
blessedly in harmony,

Tick tock... tick tock.

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