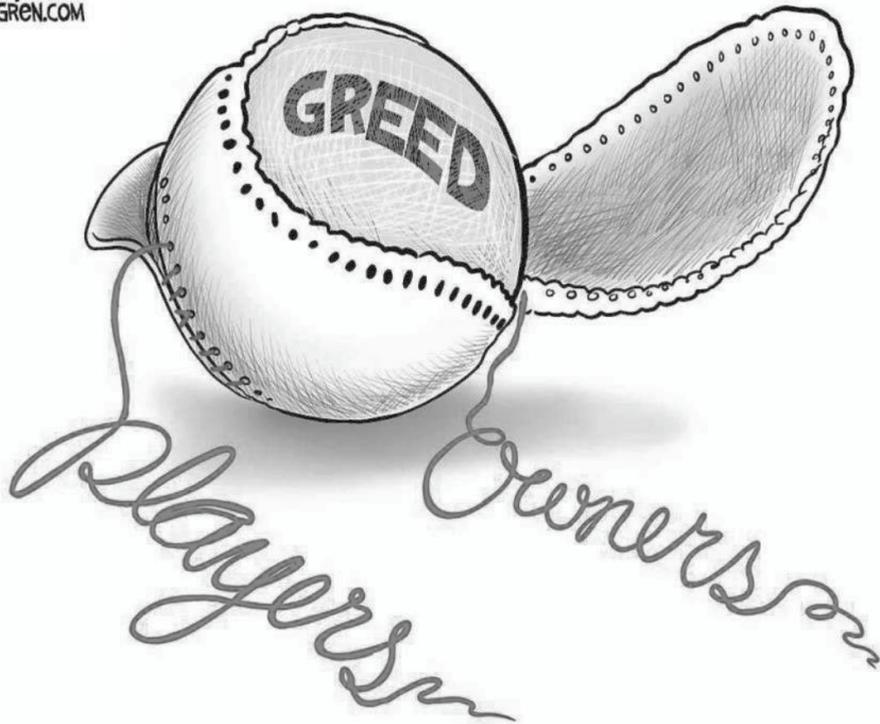


# OPINION

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

LANDGREN  
DONLANDGREN.COM



DON LANDGREN/WORCESTER MAGAZINE

## Political action can cure our COVID-19 troubles



**Your Turn**  
Ned O'Gorman  
Guest columnist

Hannah Arendt, one of the 20th century's great political theorists, fled the Nazis in 1933 and ended up in the United States, where she wrote trenchant analyses of all things political — from totalitarianism to political revolution to war. Her work offers insights in a time of pandemic, police brutality and protest.

Arendt wrote of “authentic politics,” the back-and-forth interplay between regular people in a democracy. Done right, politics not only combats hyper-partisanship and raw power plays but helps us thrive.

Arendt taught at places like the University of Chicago and the New School. But she was more than an academic. She regularly commented in magazines and journals on the current events of her time — from the trial of the Nazi Adolf Eichmann to the Civil Rights movement. Writing during the Cold War, her political sympathies were neither highly individualistic nor communistic; rather, they were directed toward individuals working among others — sometimes in concert, sometimes antagonistically — to achieve new goals.

Arendt's stature has grown since her death because of the curious case she made for politics. She refused partisan labels, criticized partisanship and opposed the concentration of state power — arguing that politics was distinct from all of this, and that it was a positive human good. When people gather together in relative freedom as equals to address matters of common concern, no matter what the issue, they reveal the capacity for people to truly make a difference.

Arendt associated politics with birth, even miracles. She once wrote of politics: “Whenever something new occurs, it bursts into the context of predictable processes as something unexpected, unpredictable, and ultimately causally inexplicable — just like a miracle.” If politics is the art of different people getting along with all the power they have, the distinctive power of politics is different people getting along to change the course of things, stop the inevitable and do something new.

Arendt's work suggests better paths out of the crises of 2020. Left to its own, the course and outcome of COVID-19 is inevitable. It will kill millions of people globally and upwards of 200,000 in the U.S. But with effective collective action, we can reduce those numbers many times. The same is true of the systemic reform we desperately need to quash white supremacy — the systems won't reform themselves, but with effective collective action we can do something new and better.

These Arendtian “buts” are not natural possibilities; they are political ones. It depends on you, me and many others exercising our power to respond creatively to ruthless phenomena. As Arendt might put it, together — through authentic politics — we can orchestrate an “interruption” of the automatic, chain-reaction spreads of deadly viruses or racist violence. And that is what we are beginning to do across the land and indeed in other parts of the globe.

Totalitarianism and authoritarianism, Arendt argued, are perpetual threats, not once-in-a-millennium disruptions. Political parties, because they can so readily gravitate toward the seizure of power over respect for persons (though they need not), do not offer a reliable stopgap to authoritarianism. A robust democratic political culture, however, can.

World War II was the defining event of Arendt's life. After its wreckage, some thinkers argued for world government, others for the restoration of a “balance of powers,” others for the expansion of free markets, and yet others for the construction of a deterrent military force. Arendt looked upon all these solutions with skepticism. The cause of World War II, she made plainly clear, was totalitarianism, a one-party system of total domination — and the key to preventing another global war would be to push back passionately on all attempts at the total domination of people, no matter what their form.

Today, some have already compared the impacts of COVID to World War II, and the world is pouring out into the streets to fight brutality. We need politics in the way Arendt described it. The near and longer-term future is not up to the powers that be; it is up to us. But don't worry, politics was made for this.

*Ned O'Gorman is a professor in the department of communication at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of “Politics for Everybody: Reading Hannah Arendt In Uncertain Times.”*

### YOUR VOICE

#### History is a teacher, not a threat

Desert Sun headline: “Petition calls for removal of statue in Palm Springs” (June 24). Then the statement “I just thought we have our own racist past ...” by a political activist. Just for a headline?

Sounds like someone needs something value-added to do. Honestly, the statement seems to forebode a political antagonist.

The most dangerous political activists of the modern world preaching this same destructive logic, put into motion the scourge of World War II in Europe. This dire and consequential logic paved a path of erasing history with destruction of books, museums, statues, countries and human life. Have we learned nothing? Destroying inanimate objects will not destroy emotions as they can inherently live on. We need to start thinking and feeling again. History is teacher, not threat.

This statue is acknowledgement to a person whose

good exceeded his failings — the way we all would like to be remembered. T

he strength of these statues is not that of perfection but those of example, with the question being: Who can cast the first stone?

Lessons learned from history are the best teachings we have, and we don't recognize it for its steadfast worth. Non-thinking simply undermines that which we can learn the most from. A shame.

*Steve Koch, Palm Springs*

#### Let's rethink equality

In the United States of today, we must as a people of all colors draft new dreams of equality and equity. For the argument that privilege is inherent to whiteness is as execrable as the assertion that disqualification is characteristic of Blackness.

Structural racism, if it is to be excavated from our histories, must be taken down brick by brick, scooped



**Your Turn**  
Frederick B. Axelrod  
Guest columnist

## Blood donations more important than ever now

Coachella Valley hospital patients are — right now — awaiting surgeries, cancer treatments and other life-dependent procedures that require blood products to be ready and available for issue at our local hospitals. Our local blood supply is at a critically low level.

We must respond.

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc with everyday life, including hospital schedules to serve all their patients, it is our calling as a compassionate community to take decisive action.

This unprecedented time is the backdrop for LifeStream Blood Bank's Eighth annual Nine Cities Blood Drive Challenge, July 1-Aug. 31.

COVID-19 concerns have postponed for weeks many elective (but often important) procedures. No more. Now a backlog of treatments that require blood are on the schedule. But with the Coachella Valley's blood supply critically low and our summertime population decreased 30 percent, the “supply vs. demand” balance is lopsided.

Please do your part. During the challenge, give blood at one of our local donor centers or schedule a blood drive in your community with LifeStream, the exclusive blood service provider to all Coachella Valley hospitals. Bring a friend, a neighbor, a colleague to donate with you. All donations received at a LifeStream donor center or blood drive can help make your city a champ.

You'll get, while supplies last, a commemorative T-shirt. Plus, all completed donations are tested for presence of COVID-19 antibodies. You'll know results about 2 weeks after you donate. This test does not tell you if you have a current COVID-19 infection. This test determines if your immune system has produced antibodies to the virus. If you have these antibodies you may be eligible to donate COVID-19 convalescent plasma and help critically ill local COVID-19 patients. (Note that this test does not determine if you currently have COVID-19; do not attempt to donate blood if you do not feel well.)

This summer, there are more opportunities — and fewer excuses — than ever to contribute toward your city's total. Throughout July and August, hold a blood drive or donate at LifeStream's air-conditioned La Quinta (79-215 Corporate Centre Drive) or Rancho Mirage (42390 Bob Hope Drive, next to Hobby Lobby) locations and tell our staff you want your gift designated to your city. You'll receive, while supplies last, the T-shirt as well.

Yes, there are bragging rights at stake. We'll keep careful count of how all nine cities are progressing, frequently updating the numbers at [lstream.org](http://lstream.org). At the conclusion of the challenge, we'll present awards for the community that collects the most pints/units overall, for the highest producing single blood drive and for the highest percentage of participation per total city population (1% participation minimum for this specific award).

But as always, regardless of who takes home championship hardware, the real winners are patients in need and their loved ones. They are why we plead with you today.

One more thing. The well-being of heroic blood donors is our No. 1 priority. Toward that pursuit, LifeStream staff and donors are required to wear face coverings and undergo temperature checks and COVID-19 symptoms check before accessing donor waiting areas.

LifeStream adheres to social distancing guidelines and has enhanced already strict cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

For more information and to set an appointment, please call (800) 879-4484 or visit [lstream.org](http://lstream.org).

Give hope, give life, give blood.

*Frederick B. Axelrod, MD, MBA, is the president, CEO and medical director at LifeStream Blood Bank. He can be reached at [raxelrod@lstream.org](mailto:raxelrod@lstream.org).*

out and sifted away.

Its foundations were laid in measures, and demolition bombs destroy only the facades of power. Unearthing its bedrock is painstaking work.

Since every culture composes its own traditional stories to explain some practice, rite or phenomenon of nature, any complex of beliefs is mythical in nature. Life is a text, after all, and as authors, we have incredible power.

Instead of availing ourselves of destructive impulses that threaten to despoil us of our potential, why not make use of our creative instincts as Americans to plot new artistic visions that re-contextualize the significance of images of oppression?

By working together to rewrite cultural mores, drawing on every experience without denigrating any, we can plot our way out of this current madness.

Living in a country without peace would destroy our essential political undertaking.

*Miles D. Hill, La Quinta*

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

**Julie Makinen**  
Executive Editor

**Al Franco**  
Engagement Editor/Opinion

**Darby Wright**  
Desert Sun Staff

**Gloria Franz**  
Community Member

**Becky Kurtz**  
Community Member

**Terria Smith**  
Community Member

**Rob Moon**  
Community Member