

Quotables

“The gulf between what needs to happen (dramatic, sweeping transformation of our basic social contract) and what our bipartisan leadership class is offering (bailouts for big business and maybe a bit of survival cash for the rest of us if we ask nicely) is just enormous.”

- @davidklion

*“So society’s **real** key workers have just been revealed. Not the bankers. Not the traders. Not the elite hedge fund managers. It’s the nurses. The doctors. The delivery drivers. The carers. The porters. The teachers. The shelf stackers. The check out staff.”*

- @doctor_oxford

“Good thing we didn't do something stupid like connect healthcare with employment status or this could really get bad.”

- @dansinker

Welcome to the second day of The Antidote!

“You have the authority to do so under _____ act/law. Could you please do so, and if not, can you explain in detail why you won't?”

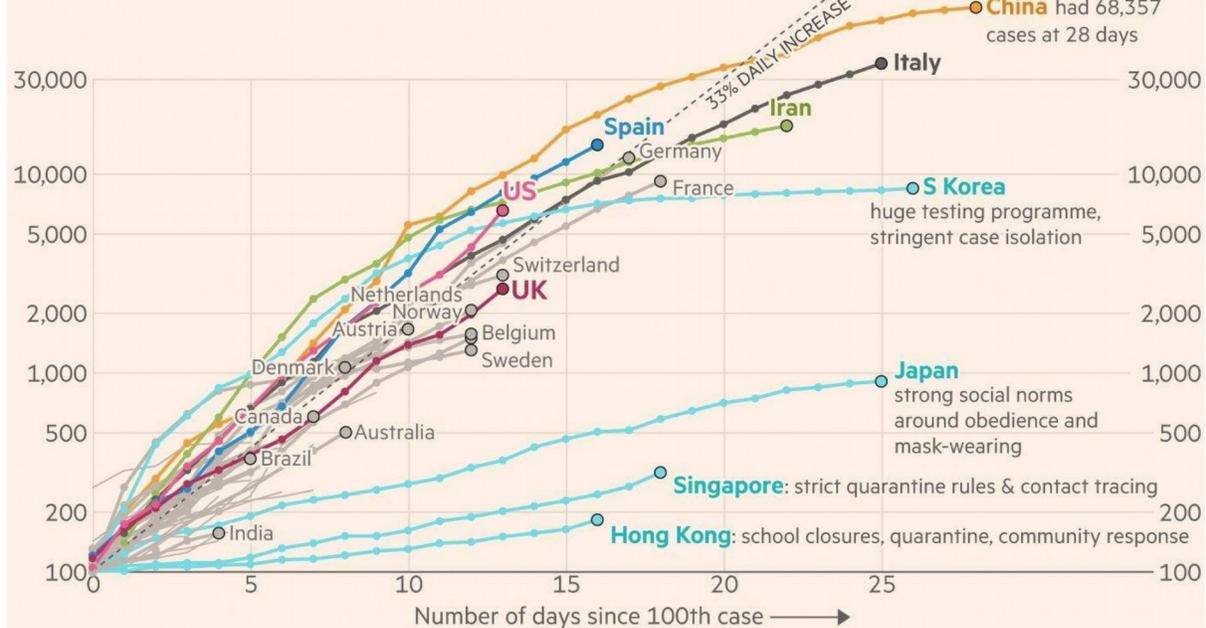
This will become the best form of question. It was done [in a spectacular way](#) by Rep Katie Porter, questioning CDC director Redfield on whether he will offer free testing. She got him to say yes. If you remember it, then do your homework to find that law, suddenly you are an investigative reporter. I hereby deputize you.

So. We’re on a curve WORSE than Italy’s. (And Italy’s death toll [just overtook](#) China’s, with a population 1/24 that of China.) Brace yourself.

This graphic was from Financial Times:

Most western countries are on the same coronavirus trajectory. Hong Kong and Singapore have limited the spread; Japan and S Korea have slowed it

Cumulative number of cases, by number of days since 100th case



FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch
 Source: FT analysis of Johns Hopkins University, CSSE; Worldometers. Data updated March 18, 19:00 GMT
 © FT

Last but not least before we get into news, another PSA. The newsletter 730DC made me realize: is there any safe—and thus ethical—way to go out to fetch groceries during this? At minimum we should all be wearing paper masks when we do, because of how many asymptomatic cases there are. You could have it, be giving it to others, and not know.

Remember: aerosol from a person’s normal breathing can contain the virus in an infectious form, and can even land on surfaces. A paper mask restricts the aerosol more than not. And I say paper mask specifically because we probably want to leave the good N95 masks for health workers.

NEWSNEWSNEWSNEWS:

- ASYMPTOMATIC TRANSMISSION AND TESTING – Without testing of virtually the entire population, asymptomatic people will continue to spread the disease. [New data shows](#) that asymptomatic positive people transmit even more than we thought they did: an [estimated](#) 44% of transmission in the 2-3 days prior to symptoms. This means that the daily news appearances by Trump and crew, always reassuring from Donald, are full of shit. Pardon my French, but it means that without 100% testing, the world faces immeasurable peril. The military is [now shuttling](#) testing supplies around the country, but is it fast enough? A kit that provides 2000 tests [appears available online](#) for \$3,800—so, ~\$2 per test—but you have to know how to read the CDC’s guidelines on conducting it. New York State is [thankfully now testing](#) at a higher per capita rate than South Korea.

- PRISONS AND JAILS COULD EASILY BECOME DEATH TRAPS – The top doctor in the New York state prison system [took to Twitter](#) to cry out for mass releases. He understands the conditions are ripe for mass death, or at least mass infection (tight quarters, low nutrition), which will result in mass death, considering how few ventilators prisons tend to maintain. My estimate: one in six residents of prisons or jails, if not released in the next couple weeks, will die. I realize that sounds alarmist but it's not fantastical to imagine a 90% infection rate and a near 20% death rate of those infected, since the ventilator coverage can be rounded to zero. Though I'm a journalist, I [took to Twitter to advocate](#) for "mass release" because of the human rights situation this is. The virus is now [confirmed](#) in several prisons and jails, including NY's Rikers.
- A 3000-PERSON TOWN IN ITALY [TESTED EVERYONE](#). NOW IT DOESN'T HAVE THE VIRUS – Of course it was more than just testing. They quarantined people who they found to have it and locked down the town's borders. But it goes to show what 100% testing can do.
- "NETFLIX PARTY" COULD SAVE US – A new [extension](#) for the Google Chrome browser allows groups of people to watch the same movie or show at the exact same time. Socializing for the isolation age.
- IT ALL COMES BACK AGAIN - Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore have [seen new spikes of cases](#) in recent days, after the world had thought they had the virus under control. It's gonna be a longer slog than we thought.
- GOP [PROPOSES BILL](#) TO GIVE LESS CASH TO POOR PEOPLE – In case they haven't already been transparent enough with their wishes. (Though Mitt Romney [filed his dissent](#) at the unequal plan.) Here's journalist Adam Johnson: *"Note how the atomic unit of moral worth is "taxpayer"—which is used a half dozen times in the...legislation—and not "workers" or "humans." Using taxes as the mechanism for aid renders millions of undocumented, homeless & informal economy workers unpersons. They simply don't exist."* At any rate, I'm gonna try to make it an exception in this newsletter to talk about bills one side proposes before a signoff from the other. Just too many get shot down to merit their inclusion on this "need to know" list of news.
- PLENTY OF OTHERWISE-HEALTHY 30-SOMETHINGS HAVE [DIED](#) – from the virus. Take care of yourself.
- YOU [PROBABLY DON'T](#) HAVE TO FILE TAXES UNTIL JULY 15 – Rad sauce.
- RENTERS NOT YET PROTECTED – Trump touted foreclosure protection for owners and eviction-protection renters, but he neglected to mention it [only covers](#) single-family homes with loans through the Federal Housing Administration. If you rent from a larger rental business, or your landlord doesn't have an FHA loan, you don't see a benefit.
- BIDEN STILL MILQUETOAST ON WHITE COLLAR GRAFT – One of the few things he's said publicly in recent days was [on Twitter](#): "I am calling on every CEO in America to publicly commit now to not buying back their company's stock over the course of the next year." Many, like @krystalball, [respond](#) with something like "'Publicly commit???' Get real. We need laws and potential prosecutions."

- ALL THREE DETROIT AUTOMAKERS SHUT – This [happened mid-week](#). They seem open to converting the factories to make ventilators, and claimed that they had been in contact with the Trump administration to do that.
- BOEING [WANTS \\$60B](#) BUT [BOUGHT \\$35B](#) OF ITS OWN STOCK OVER 5 YEARS – That’s it, that’s the tweet. Oh and there’s [no reason](#) for doing that other than to make shareholders richer; that’s the only function. Other than taking cash from the business that could be used to expand the business—run it better, not make faulty planes, that kind of thing.
- LOCAL TRANSIT THAT RELIES ON USER FEES NEEDS BAILED OUT - DC [had to spend](#) \$17 million on extra sanitation & personal protective equipment amid an 85% drop in ridership that means they bring in \$52 million a month less in fees. (Word is NYC’s system asked for \$4 billion.)
- 1.5M JOBS WOULD COME FROM CANCELLING STUDENT DEBT – And if it’s jobs we’re in sore need of now, this might be a quick & easy way to do it. (As opposed to just suspending payments.) [A report](#) from The Nation.
- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION [IMPLICATED IN WUHAN COVERUP](#) - “Beijing essentially committed a war crime against its people and the world, and the WHO enabled them to do that by lying for the PRC,” said researcher Matt Stoller.
- CALIFORNIA AND ILLINOIS ARE SHUT – [LA Times reports](#) that its governor has subjected travel (aside from walking outside, away from others) to most places. “The order allows Californians to visit gas stations, pharmacies, grocery stores, farmers markets, food banks, convenience stores, takeout & delivery restaurants, banks & laundromats. People can leave their homes to care for a relative or a friend or seek healthcare services.” Likely similar situations in Illinois, which [announced a lock-down](#) late Friday.
- WITHOUT INSURANCE, A [\\$35K BILL](#) FOR VIRUS TREATMENT – And remember, 40% of Americans [can’t cover a \\$400 emergency](#) with cash, savings, or a credit card payment they could quickly pay off. Those relying on the “credit card” option might be screwed too, as more Americans lose their income.
- 30% OF CHILD CARE, NEARLY ALL OF THEM MOM-N-POPS, WILL SHUT – That is, if they close for more than two weeks without governmental support, according to [a survey](#) of these providers. If they’re not around once we have the virus under control, fewer people will be able to work and the economy won’t bounce back.
- SURE IT CAME FROM CHINA, DON, BUT (SURPRISE) THE PROBLEM IS LOBBYING – Here are three things you should know about China’s role in this disease jumping from animals to humans. So as not to be racist, and so as to fight the actual root cause here. [Thanks to Vox](#) for the reporting.
 1. "The majority of people in China do not eat wildlife animals...Those who consume these animals are the rich and powerful," to whom they are marketed as health foods
 2. China's government legalized meat-farming of non-domesticated animals in the 1970s when people were starving. This legit helped to feed people, and the farming helped them pull themselves out of abject poverty.

3. After the early-2000s SARS outbreak, China made wildlife farming illegal again. But the industry turned to lobbying. (Sounds like the US!) It had been making ~\$14B USD per year and had connections in the upper classes, 'cause they were customers. So the gov't legalized.
 - After SARS, when faced with whether to re-legalize wild animal farming, "It's this (rich) minority that the government chose to favor over the rest of the population." Post-COVID-19, China has banned it again, but it's unclear whether the ban will be permanent.
- VENTILATORS VENTILATORS EVERYWHERE – But not enough to save us. ([Roughly 200,000](#) in the U.S. now.) I promised some news on ventilators, and the reality is that we don't know precisely how many more we'll need. But we're gonna need them in a few weeks to a few months, and the U.S. could need anywhere from 200K-700K more, the low end of which is four times the annual production capacity of the entire world. From [this HuffPost article](#),

(An) executive...in the industry recalled the story of World War II factories ramping up production of "Liberty ships" and compressing the build time to just a few weeks and eventually a few days. But the executive also gave a warning: It took about two years to develop that capacity. "It's the quintessential American story, but they weren't pumping them out that quickly in 1941," the executive said. "There was a ramp-up period for that as well."

Mid-week Donald Trump raised the possibility (in some official way) of invoking the Defense Production Act, which would allow the government to temporarily requisition factories to produce precisely what's needed. But the next day he seemed to [back off that tack](#), maybe after receiving pushback from businesses scared shitless. Amid all this, General Motors gave an interview with The Guardian [wherein they claimed](#) to be in discussions with the administration.

- AS OF MARCH 17, \$3.2 TRILLION IN GIVEAWAYS – To banks, other financial firms, and businesses. [Here are the receipts](#). And yet the most members of Congress have been able to agree on is about \$1000 per month. (For the record, a \$15/hr wage at 40 hours/week, which about a quarter of workers who made that lost because of the virus, pays \$2600 a month pre-tax.)
- ADMINISTRATION SEEMS TO BE WORKING PR FOR FOX – As Fox News (or might we say "News") faces increased scrutiny for its [complete dismissal](#) of the virus in the first several weeks of being in America, it would appear that officials who report to Trump, including Pence and HHS Secretary Azar, [are trying to rewrite](#) this bit of recent history, praising Fox for its coverage.
- WORKERS WITHOUT VIRUS PROTECTION AREN'T HAVING IT – From [nurses at a San Francisco facility](#) to [Amazon warehouse workers](#), if an employer isn't protecting their staff from the virus, workers seem to be standing up and fighting back, often by striking.
- THE 1918 ELECTIONS SPREAD FLU – Biden said that's why we should have held this week's primaries. Indeed, [what we learned then](#) is precisely why we shouldn't have.