"Coronavirus" is at the forefront. In three months, it has changed everyone's life. As of yesterday, it is reported that more than 3000 people have died from it in the US. The CDC reports a total of 163,539 cases nationwide. Because we have had no widespread antibody testing, we have no idea what this means in terms of R0 value or death rate. We have nothing but speculation.

But we do know this:
"About 647,000 Americans die from heart disease each year," according to the CDC. Heart disease presents a major risk factor to corona infection. The CDC also reports that about 34 million people in America have diabetes, which is a major risk factor for most other types of death, including death from coronavirus. These are just a couple of the deadly diseases America struggles with, that are primarily a result of a diet high in processed foods. Similarly, the CDC reports that 24,753,379 people in the US have asthma and 160,201 more suffer from chronic lower respiratory disease, both of which are known to be aggravated by air pollution, and both of which put a person at higher risk of complications from coronavirus. According to a New York Times article from March 28, "exposure to air pollution is known to raise the chance of contracting viruses in the first place, regardless of underlying health conditions."

The shutdown of our cities has clearly demonstrated the extent to which we have been destroying our own air quality, as blue skies have begun to reappear worldwide.

The diseases mentioned earlier amount to about **60 million** illnesses and deaths in America alone that we have caused for ourselves and we know how to prevent. And these illnesses all decrease the chance of a positive outcome with coronavirus infection.

So last Thursday, in order to avoid undue hardship for the nations largest polluters, the EPA effectively removed the existing environmental requirements for monitoring and reporting their air and water pollution and environmental waste. The companies and factories will now be trusted to self regulate. (Has anyone seen the new movie *Dark Waters*?)

We must take responsibility for ourselves! In the case of coronavirus, it has been each of our individual decisions to stay home that has made the significant differences that have been documented so far. This has been

the ultimate example of grass-roots organization for a common cause, the ultimate example of how much people really do care for others.

And in a similar spirit, those of us who can, must take responsibility for our own health. We must do what we can to help and speak up for those who are less financially fortunate, for whom real hurdles exist in their access to nutritious foods. And we must unify our voices for government action to protect our earth. We must fortify our immune systems and educate our children on how to take care of themselves. Teach them to honor health and to value the natural world, so that they may have confidence in their body's abilities to handle what comes. Coronavirus is simply at the forefront right now.

We are living in fear that 200,000 people in America may die from COVID-19. But we *know* that, with no changes, 647,000 will die of heart disease. The majority of our 3000 COVID-19 related deaths have been of those 60 million or so people who are already sick. How can we continue with policies that allow that percentage of the population to be sick?!

There currently is very little accurate information about COVID-19 to disseminate to communities around the world. We need to focus on building general health for all people, primarily by way of real (nutritious) food security and insuring that our planet remains a safe place to live. In our desperate chase to understand COVID-19, we are fighting the wrong fight.