

K PUBLIC SQUARE

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Editorial Cartoon

You are not alone

Graduates, when you are handed your diploma, that moment will mark the end of this leg through your education journey.

Those of you who graduated from high school this week will either continue your education at college, others of you will forgo further education and enter the workforce or the military. You young adults graduating from college this spring likely have your next step in mind, be it graduate school or starting a career in your chosen field.

Whatever school you graduated it is important to know that you are not alone.

You are not alone because millions of others of your age have shared the same things over the past 15 months. Much like the Greatest Generation, you and your peers have a shared experience that has changed you for the rest of your lives. Similar experience fosters empathy, a trait that is currently in too short of supply in our world.

You are not alone; your loved ones, friends and mentors have a stake in your success. There is no one who wants to stand in your way. There will always be a hand ready to help you climb to the next

rung of life. Don't shy away from asking for assistance.

Tap into the knowledge and wisdom of those who have gone before you. Few things are more validating for a person than when you ask them to share what



they know. The world becomes much less uncertain and scary with people who have your back.

Listen to the people who want you to succeed, they, too, have been where you are upon graduation. They, too, have lived through a global pandemic that upended our way of life.

You are not alone. We all need each other as we go through life, one step at a time. You've completed one step. Let others help you onto the next step and every step after that.

None of us are alone if we but dare to reach out and grab a helping hand.

—LAZ

The case that the virus emerged from nature is falling apart

By **MARC A. THIESSEN**

Anthony Fauci told Congress last week that, despite growing support for the case that the pandemic emerged from the Wuhan lab, he still believes it came from nature. “I have always said that the high likelihood is that this is a natural occurrence,” Fauci said, “and I still maintain that.” Like so many things Fauci has told Americans about the pandemic, it looks increasingly like he could be proven wrong. Not only is there still zero evidence to support the theory that the virus emerged from nature, there are mounting signs that it did not.

In the 15 months since the pandemic began, despite an exhaustive search, no intermediate host—an animal that caught the virus from bats and then spread it to humans—has been found. Nicholas Wade, a science reporter for nearly 50 years at *Science*, *Nature* and the *New York Times*—points out in his exhaustive report for the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* that during the SARS1 epidemic, the intermediate host (civet cats bred for human consumption) was identified in just four months.

Is it possible the virus jumped from bats to humans without an intermediate host? Perhaps. But a bat coronavirus is known to have directly infected humans only on one known occasion—in April 2012, when six people cleaning bat guano from a mine in China’s Yunnan province fell ill. However, it’s implausible that bats infected people in Wuhan. The city is more than 900 miles from the bat caves of Yunnan, and the bats’ range is just 30 miles. Moreover, temperatures in Wuhan in the winter of 2019, when the pandemic hit, would have sent the bats into hibernation. But what if a person infected in Yunnan brought the virus to Wuhan? As Wade explains, that individual “must have traveled . . . without infecting anyone else. No one in his or her family got sick. If the person jumped on a train to Wuhan, no fellow passengers fell ill.” That scenario is also highly unlikely.

Furthermore, if SARS2 jumped directly from bats to people, then it should still be good at infecting bats. But it isn’t. Studies show that “tested bat species are poorly infected by SARS-CoV-2, and they are therefore unlikely to be the direct source for human infection.” In fact, Wade writes, there is no evidence the virus ever infected bats. No original bat population has been found. Indeed, he points out, researchers have found no evidence showing any creature—animal or human—had ever been exposed to the virus before the winter of 2019.

Then there is the structure of the virus itself. Pandemic viruses don’t become highly transmissible or deadly in a single jump. As Wade explains, “The coronavirus spike protein, adapted to attack bat cells, needs repeated jumps to another species, most of which fail, before it gains a lucky mutation.” In the case of SARS1, the virus mutated before it made the jump from bats to civets, then it made six further documented changes before it became a mild pathogen in humans, then made 14 more changes to become more adapted to people, and then four more before it was able to cause an epidemic.



But, Wade continues, “when you look for the fingerprints of a similar transition in SARS2, a strange surprise awaits. The virus has changed hardly at all, at least until recently. From its very first appearance, it was well adapted to human cells.” This would make perfect sense if it was engineered in a lab to become transmissible to humans, but not if it emerged from nature.

Not only is SARS2 missing these natural mutations, Wade writes, but it also includes a surprising addition: a “furin cleavage site” on its spike protein that allows it to invade human cells. Why is this surprising? Because SARS2 is the only known SARS-related coronavirus that has a furin site; the rest use a different mechanism to infect humans. It’s improbable that SARS2 picked up its furin site naturally, but Wade cites an academic paper that points out “at least 11 gain-of-function experiments, adding a furin site to make a virus more infective, are published in the open literature, including [by] Dr. Zhengli Shi, head of coronavirus research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.” That’s right, the “bat lady” of the Wuhan lab—the one who received funding via a U.S. contractor from Fauci’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases—experimented with furin sites to make coronaviruses more infectious for humans.

Bottom line? As former FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb recently explained, evidence for a lab leak is mounting, while the evidence for natural origin “has contracted.” At this point, he says, the burden should be on Beijing to “provide evidence that would be exculpatory,” such as virus samples, blood samples from lab workers hospitalized with covid-like symptoms in November 2019, and unfettered access to the lab and its personnel. So long as the Chinese Communist Party fails to provide that exculpatory evidence, and obstructs an impartial international investigation, then the assumption should be that the Wuhan lab was the source of the pandemic -- and that Beijing must be held to account.

(Washington Post)

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