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May 31, 2020: Regarding This Moment

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Title: Regarding This Moment

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5/31/2020--On Friday, David Brooks tweeted, "This has been one of the worst weeks of our collective lives: 100K dead, an economy still collapsing, racism, murder, conspiracy mongering, a president more contemptible by the day. Hang in there. It will get better." At this same time, I am working on Chapter 1 in my upcoming book, *The Universe Is On Our Side: Restoring Faith in American Public Life: The Breakdown in American Public Life*. But, what is that breakdown? Brooks is discouraged. That is not surprising since he has no ontological foundation. That is, his native optimism is not grounded in the nature of the universe. Thus, all he can say is, "Hang in there." But the bright prospects of hope are absolutely present in his array of bad news. President Trump, for example, is undoing himself. Trying to court black voters, he threatens to have protestors shot. Trump is more concerned with stores than with black lives taken by rogue police officers. Well, that is not shocking, but to see it only a few months before an election.... And Trump's baselessly accusing a private citizen of murder? His media supporters recoil. And racism--what would you have said if, in the course of human lifetime, police brutality went from intentional policy to a charge of murder? If the casual racism of white Americans would be captured on a video and exposed and condemned by the whole country? Where young, and younger, people naturally feel outrage, an old man like me can see only the most amazing progress. America is finally purging itself of racism. It will not be long before the police are widely regarded as a force for protection among all communities. That is why Trump's call for violence against the protestors fell so flat. The country mourns two acts of senseless violence--the deaths of George Floyd and Dave Patrick Underwood. They are martyrs to a future of peace. And the virus--receding. We could have done better. But the truth is, we don't really know what works even now. And the economy is actually improving. It will get better. But not because of some mindless optimism. It will get better because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.