

A Game of Homes

By  Edward Herridge

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So, here's the thing. The last time the world was united in a single cause to this extent was World War 2. This time around, however, it is not a battle against an ideology but one that is in opposition to one of the oldest frenemies of man: the virus.



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To help you understand what we are fighting, I am going to cast the Covid-19 virus in the role of the Winter King from G.R.R Martins' *Game of Thrones*. He thrives in the cold, can take over the bodies of anybody and turn them into shambling corpses. Because of him, we are all now stuck in our strongholds, and the governments of our countries must guard the wall. We fear to leave our homes because we can feel the Winter King's icy breath in the streets and his influence everywhere. We are now all literally within this fantasy reality and like any good fantasy, there will be a conflict that we cannot afford to lose.

So, how do we assure victory? Firstly, we disrupt the enemy's supply lines. What does the Winter King seek? Bodies. Warm bodies that he wants to make cold. So, how do we deprive him of this resource? We do what we are doing now - we isolate ourselves. His strength lies in numbers. His strategy does not rely on finesse but in sheer numbers. Numbers that overwhelm our own resources.

Once this has been achieved, we will be faced with dealing with his agents who are tireless in their efforts to seek collaborators and converts. This is a different battle entirely. This one takes place in our own minds and in our own homes. We must strengthen our resolve, and when we do go out, we must armour ourselves against his influence with gloves, masks and distance. We must stay strong and not allow fear to weaken us.



PR lessons from *Game of Thrones*

Chirene Campbell 21 Apr 2020



Fear is one of the Winter King's most powerful agents, along with mystery and misinformation. Just watch the first season of *GOT*, and you will see how he shrouds himself in confusion and terror. Then you will understand how powerful a weapon these three agents can be. The longer the Winter King could make people believe that he didn't exist, the more powerful he

could become.

There is a reason I used the platform of fantasy to make these much-belaboured points. Though, by now, you must have heard them all. There is still a battleground and a battle that you might not have realised exists. That of the one being waged in the fantasy world of your own mind. This is the most important battle you will face in your isolation, but one that can be won by simply following the following few strategies.

Get reinforcements

You are in isolation but not isolated. Reach out to your allies, build up your forces. Talk to them. Compare notes and strategies. Talk about the things you are afraid to think. Remember that the Winter King is, for the most part, an unseen enemy that thrives on fear. Fear only grows in dark places we create in our minds. Cast light into this darkness, and you will find it to be just another empty space.

Set up routine patrols

Routine is probably one of the most important things you can deploy. Make sure you have a weekly and weekend routine. Keep on working but also ensure you rest. Don't try to lose yourself in work or distractions. Keep a balance. Too much work will depress you and too much distraction will do the same.

Identify and avoid enemy propaganda

The Winter King is a wily foe. He hides himself behind falsehoods and misinformation. He wants us to think that he is not real. He relies on the more predatory amongst us to use his influence to gain more wealth, attention and power; then he uses them to rip the social fabric of our worlds apart and destroy us from within. This is why it is so important to be wary of conspiracy theories. I am not saying don't talk about them. You must. If an idea makes itself into your mind, do not allow it to take root in the darkness. Follow the direction of the first two strategies, and you will be ok.

Now let's backtrack to the opening paragraph of this narrative. I referred to viruses as our frenemy. I did so because all you need to do is take a glance at history and do a quick Google search or two, and you will come to the same conclusion as I did. Viruses are both our ally and our enemy. Two examples spring to mind. The first is a bit dire but relevant.

Let's talk about the Black Plague and then human evolution. As terrible as the human cost was, had it not been for the Black Plague, we would not be enjoying the freedoms we do today, as limited as they may seem at this time. Because the Black Death depleted the workforce to such an extent, the demand for the workers and peasants who survived meant that they were able to demand better wages and working conditions afterwards. This helped to improve their standard of living; it also helped to give them more power over their lives, which contributed considerably to the state of the Western world today.



Now onto evolution. The constant battle between pathogens and their hosts has long been recognised as a key driver of evolution. Researchers applied big-data analysis to reveal the full extent of viruses' impact on the evolution of humans. Their findings suggested an astonishing 30% of all protein adaptations since humans' divergence with chimpanzees have been driven by viruses. That means that without viruses, we would not exist today.

That's just great, you say. A fat lot of help that information is going to help us in the here and now. That's where you are wrong. This is not the Black Plague. Yes, people are going to die, and yes, it is for all intents and purposes the first global mobilisation in our modern history since WWII, but unlike our last Great War and last great plague, the human cost will not be nearly as high. But the world we will reclaim in its wake will certainly be a different one. How different is entirely up to us.

ABOUT EDWARD HERRIDGE

Edward matriculated in 1992 after which he performed military service and began his working career in printing by studying electronic origination at the South African Printing College. Edward eventually became an account executive for Oakes and Associates at Investec Bank. He then migrated into advertising and became brand manager for Ronin Grain Management Solutions. Edward departed Ronin GMS to pursue his own interest before finding employment at Grey advertising as a finishing artist, re-toucher, motion graphic and digital designer.

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