



Eric Bartosz

March 2021

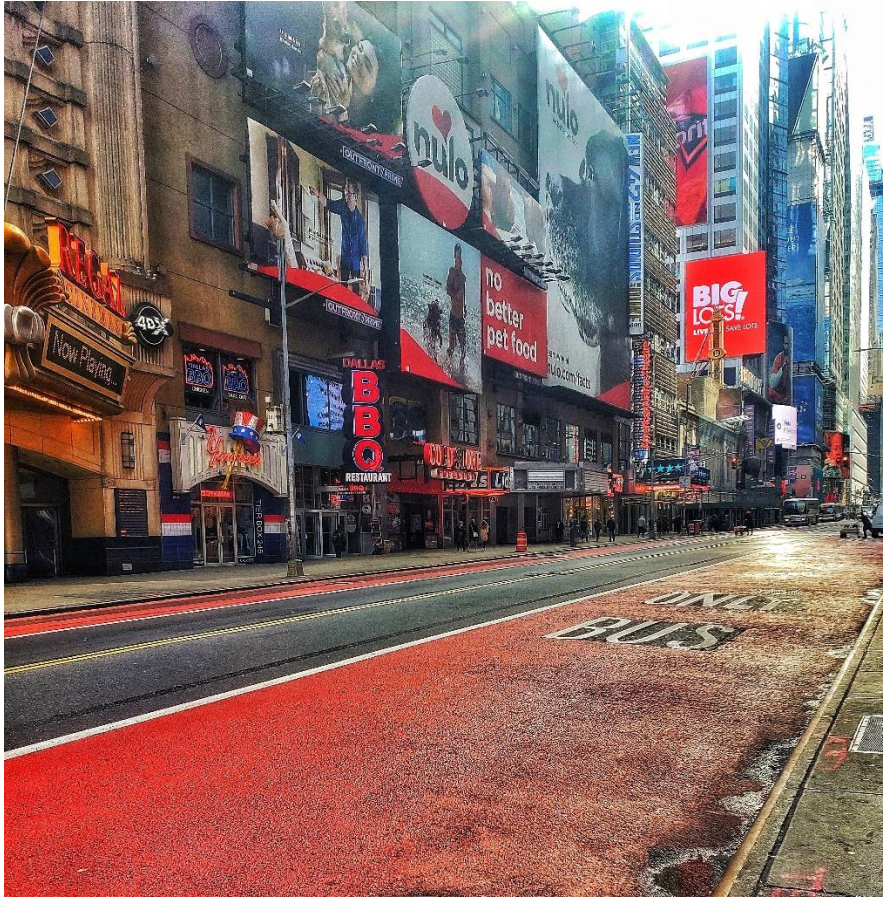
This morning, as I was doing the usual routine of getting the day started with a mug of coffee and a scroll through the regular news feeds when I was hit from all sides with a term that seemed to have mushroomed up virtually overnight. March 11th, 2020 had been deemed “The Day that Changed Everything” (let’s call it TDTCE for short). No doubt about it, the name seems to have found some fast traction and was plastered on headlines of publications all over the news universe today. (Google it, and you’ll see what I mean).

Even the photo app on my phone got into the action by chiming in with a ‘remember this day’ reminder of a picture I took on ‘TDTCE’ in Manhattan. It was on 8th Ave and 42nd St, and according to the time stamp, it was 10:22 am.

Seeing that photo took me right back to that morning and the memories of thinking how surreal 42nd St. looked with virtually no people or vehicles on it. The near-silence was as close to eerie as you could get on a beautiful sunny morning, and if it were night, I’m guessing it the comparison to a Twilight Zone episode, or a Hollywood set rendered perfectly to replicate a post-apocalypse 42nd St would have been complete. None of the usual ambient noise of horns, shouts, sirens. None of the background chatter of countless tourists walking with their head angled upwards for maximum sightseeing absorption while New York’s foot commuting workforce jostled past them power walking to wherever they were heading on any given Wednesday morning. If there were actually crickets in Times Square, their presence could have been known on that day.

I’ve worked in Manhattan since 1999, and in the last 22 years I have seen many a crazy thing in the City, but that view of 42nd St when I came around the corner from 8th Ave was a jarring sight. Thinking about it now, that would be the first of many times ‘unprecedented’ seemed to be the most fitting word.

While I didn’t refer to it as ‘TDTCE’ at the time, I did text the photo to friends and family to message that whatever was happening in NYC was some real deal stuff, and a game-changer was on the way.



We all know what the next 365 days brought; every one of us reading this had our own personal journey through it. It is now finally starting to seem that we are coming through the other side. As I write this tonight, President Biden has just announced that every adult who wants a vaccine will be able to sign up by May 1st. It would appear that we are progressing towards the light at the end of the tunnel, with the destination being a return to things we have missed most. While we all have our own list priorities, seeing extended friends and family that we have separated from and being free to travel without restriction would seem to be the top picks for many of us...it certainly is for me.

At the same time, I recognize that this past year has brought something scarce to find: extra time. With all of life usually scheduled events canceled, we were afforded a window of time to recalibrate our schedules and, in many ways, live simpler 'back to basics' lifestyles. I believe that having this opportunity to hit the reset button on our normally overscheduled days presents a unique chance to change our perspective and habits on how we manage our time in the future. To me, the best outcome is getting back to normal as a 2.0 version that brings with it the positive elements of the 'Covid life.'

Simple activities with family, getting outside and enjoying nature more, and keeping in touch with people simply to see how they're doing.

We will be back in the swing of things soon enough, and 'new normal' will continue to develop, but I propose we aim higher and shoot for the 'new and improved' normal in our lives.