

Hello. My name is Katherine and I am 55 years old. I am a wife, a mother, a professional writer and editor and I am also sick. I have a severe form of Lupus which means my autoimmune system is attacking my tissues. I also have a primary immune system disease which means my body does not recognize and form defenses against the common cold. I also have a host of ailments resulting from the damage the two diseases have caused. I spent almost ten years of my life too sick to work and barely keeping my head above water; My entire family suffered. Just this year, my husband and I have become 'empty nesters'. Both of our children are in college and we have been home alone for the first time in over 25 years. Because I was active as a college writing professor before I was sick, and I am an extrovert, the isolation of the pandemic has hit me extra hard. Fortunately, I am doing better than I have in years and I have a very part time gig as a writing tutor for our local community college. I have also finished a children's book and am working on a teen fantasy novel.

However, this plague has put me in a cage. It is a cage that has meant I cannot leave my house except to be outside somewhere or go to a doctor. I cannot even grocery shop for myself (thank you insta cart!). And I suppose my biggest gripe is that this is a plague that could have been prevented and this is no reason it should still be rampaging. I find myself angry at those who congregate in restaurants and bars with absolutely no care for others. I want to scream at the 'no maskers' and Covid deniers. They are selfish. What kind of person can deny a disease that has now killed over 300,00 Americans? Why in the world are our businesses still open? Now, we have a more virulent strain of the disease. Great. That puts me further into isolation and more at risk. I didn't think that was possible. I apologize for sounding so bitter. I realize I am not the only one in my predicament. I am one of many.

So now we are told the miracle has finally come. The vaccine is available. It has been available for a couple of months. However, due to the absolute lack of coordination between both the federal and state governments I cannot get one. That completely and totally pisses me off. Every other day I make calls. I advocate for myself. I am too young for group 1b in Texas, they tell me. "No." I say. "I have conditions that meet the criteria." They don't know what to do. I am so tired of this I could scream and I have. I just want to wear my mask at HEB! I know the vaccine is not magic. We have to achieve herd immunity. This is something I am very aware of. With a damaged immune system you always have to think about it.

I will stop here. I pray the vaccine roll out increases with President Biden's 100 day plan. I don't know what else to say.

Katherine 1-19-21