

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS (NFIA)



Serving the Indian American Community since 1980

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THANKSGIVING HERALDS A CELEBRATION OF GOOD HARVEST AND GOOD FOOD WITH FAMILY:

Thanksgiving has become synonymous with feasting with family. It is a heavily traveled holiday in America when family members meet up with other members of the family to enjoy full day of cooking turkey with all the trimmings included in dinner, such as potatoes, gravy, beans, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. Turkey is a big bird and it is put into brine and then baked. Baking for several hours is the most usual method; however, it is also purchased half cooked previously from the store and then roasted with herb butter. Quite recently, I have been receiving advertisements from the Indian restaurants that prepare masala turkey in tandoor (clay oven), barbeque style slathered with Indian spices. Obviously, more popular with people who have a palette for spices; and many other ethnic groups have modified their cooking to make it according to their taste by adding different flavorings. It is part of the acculturation; people enjoy same turkey – the big bird, however, made to their liking by basting and barbequing with variety of spices slathered and adding garnishes.



Traditionally, Thanksgiving is considered a celebration to share food in a great feast, but history has another component of this celebration, which is not at all that joyous; but a bit somber. History has recorded that Some Native Americans and many others take issue with how the Thanksgiving story is presented to the American public, and especially to schoolchildren. In their view, the traditional narrative paints a deceptively sunny portrait of relations between the Pilgrims who arrived from Europe and the natives, Wampanoag people, masking the long and bloody history of conflict between Native Americans and European settlers that resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands.

There was famine going on and Europeans who traveled by sea were very sick. So, a compromise was made to cook the turkey that was in abundance and get fur and other items from the Europeans. Since 1970, protesters have gathered on the day designated as Thanksgiving at the top of Cole's Hill, which overlooks Plymouth Rock, to commemorate a "National Day of Mourning." Similar events are held in other parts of the country. Natives were pushed out to the margins and European settlers took over the charge from the Natives and they were reduced to impoverished living.

As an annual celebration of the harvest and its bounty, moreover, Thanksgiving falls under a category of festivals that spans cultures, continents and millennia. In ancient times, the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans feasted and paid tribute to their gods after the fall harvest. Thanksgiving also bears a resemblance to the ancient Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot. Finally, historians have noted that Native Americans had a rich tradition of commemorating the fall harvest with feasting and merrymaking long before Europeans set foot on their shores. Happy Thanksgiving!!

Angela Anand, NFIA Immediate Past President, Editor of the newsletter

DIWALI CELEBRATED AT CAPITOL HILL, WHITE HOUSE, TIME SQUARE, WORLD TRADE CENTER AND IN PRIVATE HOMES AND AT MANY RESTAURANTS BY INDIAN DIASPORA:

Diwali is a very festive and auspicious Hindu festival. On this day people light lamps to ward off evil and invite the good things in life. It is also the day when people exchange gifts, meet friends and family, prepare good food, enjoy fireworks, offer prayers to Goddess Lakshmi who is known to be the giver of success and prosperity. People clean houses, purchase new items to decorate and use, offer prayer and gratitude to God and Goddess for ushering a happy and glorious upcoming year which follows short time after this festival.

Here the diaspora has been celebrating Diwali with friends, elected officials, and community leaders and they also visit temples to seek blessings. For the last several years, Diwali has been celebrated at White House, Capitol Hill, Time Square, in community and private gatherings. President Clinton, and former president Donald Trump, and now President Biden also celebrated Diwali at White House – it shows impact of diaspora.



This year one of the events celebrated at Capitol Hill brought leaders from all across the nation to not only celebrate Diwali but also to honor those Indian Americans who are serving the nation in some responsible positions and elected offices. The reception was arranged by number of associations/partners under the leadership of Indiaspora, a non-profit group.

In Washington, another event also brought elected officials to celebrate this festival of lights and included Congresswomen Nancy Pelosi and Congressman Danny Davis. Time Square, World Trade Center and several other prominent places displayed the festival of lights by decorations, and fireworks, along with cultural programs by Indian performers. Here are some of the elected officials who participated in Capitol Hill reception.

Ms. Neera Tanden, Senior Adviser to President Joe Biden, who was recently named White House Staff Secretary, and serves as the highest-ranking Indian American woman in the administration after Vice President

Kamala Harris, as well as Vice Admiral Vivek Murthy, US Surgeon General, spoke about the inspiration behind Diwali. "The fundamental lesson of Diwali is to recognize and remember our light and the light within others, and to focus on that. That is our charge today, in a world that has been turned upside down by this pandemic as well as a growing pandemic of polarization," said Dr. Vivek Murthy.

Many elected officials spoke about Diwali and also the inspiration from the life of Mahatma Gandhi to serve the people with truth and without hate. Indian diaspora has made significant contribution to the society and due to their hard work have established their positive relationships with the elected officials. These officials addressed the reception.

Congressman James Clyburn, House Majority Whip (SC-6), Congressman Steve Chabot, U.S. Representative and Co-Chair of House India Caucus (OH-1), Congressman Ami Bera, U.S. Representative (CA-7), Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, U.S Representative (WA-7), Congressman Ro Khanna, U.S. Representative and Vice Chair of House India Caucus (CA-17), Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, U.S. Representative (IL-8) Congresswoman Judy Chu, Chair of Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CA-27), Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, U.S. Representative (NY-12), Congressman Al Green, U.S. Representative (TX-9), Congressman Tim Ryan, U.S. Representative (OH-13).

DIWALI CELEBRATION WITH COMMUNITY AND ELECTED OFFICIALS IN ANAHEIM, CA:

Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, Los Angeles Chapter, celebrated Diwali as well as the birthday of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as Bharat Ekta Diwas (India Unity Day). on Sunday, November 7, 2021 at Gayatri Chetna Center in Anaheim, CA. This function was organized in coordination with local Gurudwaras, Derasars, and Jain, BAPS and Buddha Temples. Master of Ceremonies were well known community leaders Mr. Harkishan Vasa and Mrs. Surekha Modi.

Program started with warm welcome by Radhikaben Patel and Lamp Lighting collectively by all dignitaries and representatives of various faiths. Mayors of City of La Palma and City of Cerritos sent their representatives to congratulate the attendees on this auspicious occasion of Diwali. Mayor of La Palma Hon' Nitesh Patel, and former Mayor and current Council member Honorable Naresh Solanki honored, through their representatives, the leaders of the community as well as the performers with certificates of recognition on behalf their respective cities.



The students of Savitri Arts Academy presented Sita Swayamber directed by Dr. Sinduri Jayasinghe. "Got Bhangra" team performed bhangra to the delight of the audience. Two beautiful classical dances were presented by girls from Jagruti group. Key note speaker Ajay Shah congratulated the organizers for arranging the celebration and talked about significance of Diwali to not only Hindus but to many other religions as well. Other speakers who spoke at the occasion were; Gyanendra Guru Gurung from Buddha Temple, Paul (Satnam) Singh from Norco Gurudwara, Gurbux Singh Bhasin, Kantibhai and Ashok Shah.

Dr. Pravin Sedani and Surekha Modi (with Hasmukh Modi on Keyboard) entertained the audience with rendition of beautiful songs. A congratulatory message from Chief Minister of Gujarat (India) was read to the audience. Mr. Harkishan Vasa made a request to the attendees to open their hearts with donation towards arranging food for the needy. Kaushakbhai Patel delivered the vote of thanks. Ashok (Pat) Patnaik, Vice President of NFIA and the Parks and Recreational Commissioner presented 15 certificates from the City of Cerritos, CA to various community volunteers who organized the successful event.

RAJPUT ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA CELEBRATES DIWALI ON OCTOBER 30, 2021

Members of Rajput Association of America (RAOA) Established in 1984, a member of National Federation of Indo-American Associations (NFIA), celebrated their annual Diwali function on Saturday, October 30, 2021 at Tandoor, Cuisine of India, in Orange City, CA. Manjit Dasaur and Kewal Kanda, president and trustee for RAOA respectively, were Masters of Ceremony. The function started with traditional Lamp Lighting and Pooja performed by Priest Gopal Shastri from Norco Hindu Temple followed by Arti and obeisance to Goddess Lakshmi. Boxed Sweets were distributed to all attendee families.



The cultural program started with traditional Indian classical dances performed beautifully by the students of Savitri Arts Academy under the direction of Kalaimamani Dr. Sinduri Jayasinghe. Classical dances were followed by acrobatic dance performance by Sonali Kanda who improvised her own dance routine. All performers were awarded with certificates of recognition given by Chairman Rajinder Dhunna and President Manjit Dasaur of Rajput Association of America.

Aparna Hande, NFIA and RAOA member, was given a surprise when her 75th birthday was announced. Every year, RAOA during its annual Diwali function recognizes the students of high, Middle, and Elementary Schools as well as students who would join Kindergarten the first time. This year total of twelve students were awarded with cash prizes and Certificates of Recognition. RAOA does this gesture to encourage students to study hard and get good grades. The function ended with serving of sumptuous dinner catered by Tandoor, Cuisine of India.

NFIA MEMBER ORGANIZATION CELEBRATED DIWALI IN LAKE FOREST, CA:

IASC and Vedic Mandir of city of Lake Forest celebrated the festival of Diwali on Nov 6, 2021. in city Auditorium of Lake Forest CA. The event was full of festive theme and colors. More than seventy artists performed. They age of the performers included from 10 years old to 85 years old. Nalini Trivedi who played Roll of Mata Sabari proved on stage that it is never too late to learn new things in life.

Other well-known dance teachers brought their students to show case their dance style of different states from India. Jagruti Gandhi, Mahalakshmi Balaji, Pavitra Krishnan, Ruchi Lambha and Paulomi Pandit and Anvita, are super dancer and dance teachers who have taken Indian dance style culture to main stream public in California.

Kamini Khare presented, with the help of performers, few historical and mythological stories of God and Goddesses, worshipped in India. Diya dance Ganesh Vandana, shri Ram bhajan dance in traditional kathak style, Bharat Natyam and Bollywood dances all were performed meticulously and were considered the favorites of the audience.



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DIWALI STREET FAIR HELD IN ARTESIA, CA, BY THE CITY AND MERCHANTS OF ARTESIA, CA- NFIA PARKS COMMISSIONER RECOGNIZED BY THE ORGANIZERS:

The City of Artesia along with the 4th district supervisor (Janice Hahn) and some of the merchants on Pioneer Blvd, Artesia City organized a lively Diwali program on Saturday, November 6, 2021.



This area of Los Angeles is where several Indian merchants have their shops and businesses. It is also called affectionately, The Little India. The hustle and bustle of this area makes diaspora nostalgic about their roots in India. Women can find their fashionable outfits to wear to special occasion and men can also find long robes and turbans representing the culture of Rajasthan and Punjab along with many other places in India where turban is worn to shelter from heat and cold weather and also a religious symbol of Punjabi sikhs. Besides these, all spices and produce to cook the Indian foods is readily available here

Safron Spot organized a fashion show that had models showcasing some beautiful outfits. PreetySha, a notable Southern California Bollywood singer regaled the gathering with some exotic Bollywood songs.

All elected officials along with commissioners were recognized by the organizers. NFIA Vice President, Ashok (Pat) Patnaik, also serving as Parks and Recreational Commissioner of the City of Cerritos, was recognized at this event. Congratulations to Pat Patnaik for this honor bestowed upon him for his contributions to the city.

INDO AMERICAN SOCIAL ASSOCIATION HELD DIWALI FUNCTION:

Diwali celebration brought Indian socialites to join in large numbers to enjoy food, cultural program, and comradery of their members, invited guests and friends. The program started by the president with a welcome and then followed a summary of all year activities as narrated by the program emcees Amandeep Kamboj, Sonakshi Sagar and Seema Sagar. Another narration of charitable activities was done by Harshal Vanza who counted all the activities and time that was devoted during Covid times, online and in person, to help homeless people, hospitals, doctors and many more effected by Covid. It was also mentioned about their mental health event which was very successful in addressing the issues during Covid.



A special segment involved honoring the community leaders and workers who have helped the community through various organizations and from NFIA included President Ajoy Dube and Kewal Kanda, chair of I-75, and former treasurer of GOPIO. Women Empowerment club chairwoman Anju Multani introduced these special invitees and plaques were given by jasmine Taneja. Other names that were recognized were Tulsi Savani, Hark Vasa, Ashok Madan, Kanak singh Zala, Falguni Zala, and Gary Grewal from NRI press.

The event included an elaborate program with ganpathi puja, Indian folk dances, and music by DJ and Dhol performance under the guidance of Trupti Gorajia and Jalpa buch. Rohan buch mesmerized the crowd with his saxophone. Gagan Sidhu sang along with Joshipura sisters to make the evening at a wonderful location with great ambiance.

Also especially mentioned associations' officers included chairman Tarlochan Rangji, Vice President Ravi Sagar, Vinod Sagar, executive Vice President Ashok Vanza, Vice President Dr Asmath noor, Vice President Dr Atul Karia, secretary women club Anju Sharma, Vikrant Arora, founder Dr Sanjay Vaswani, Akash winery Harshad Patel and the president Rajbir Husson and his wife Jasmine Taneja for their numerous contributions of time in planning events throughout the year.

GLOBAL PEACE FOUNDATION, INC. and UNA-USA CLEBRATED UNITY IN DIVERSITY:

Dr. Manorama Gupta, president and Founder President of Global Peace Foundation, Inc and president of UNA-USA Long Beach Chapter and members of both organizations collectively organized a virtual session through Zoom platform to celebrate Unity in Diversity on October 31, 2021.

There were numerous speakers who talked on various subjects; Rachel Brown Pittman – Exec Director of UNA-USA, talked about Covid-19 and its response. She said no one could tackle this problem early on. It needed a coordinated effort to overcome the early problems. She said 19 months after the beginning of this pandemic approximately Five Million people have died around the world. Our inability to equitable distribution of vaccines has contributed to the problem of not able to control the pandemic.

Dr. Manorama Gupta, president of GPF and UNA-USA LB Chapter said, GPF and UNA-USA are joining hands to

donate 10,000 Meals to Rise for Hunger organization. She asked everyone to donate and help collect money for this cause. Our goal is to collect \$5000 that will pay for 10,000 meals.

Hans Koechler – president of International Progressive Organization (IPO) joined for Vienna, Austria, the birth place of United Nations, and spoke about United Nation’s Charter. The commitment to diversity as basis of global peace was the message that founders of the world organization proclaims solely in the preamble of charter of the United Nations. We the people reaffirms the equal rights of men and women of nations small and large.

Susan Seats traveled to many countries and visited some African countries and lived in a village. Tribal people are instilling valuable qualities in kids. She presented a video of kids dance. She quoted Mother Teresa that Peace begins with a smile. Dr. Tomoko Takahashi – VP Institutional Research and Assessment, Soka University of America, talked about legendry Rosa Park. She said she drew a lot encouragement from her.

Anshuman Sinha – president of TiE-SoCal said Unity and diversity are concepts of individuals who have certain defenses amongst them. These defenses can be on the basis of culture, language, ideology, religion, sect, class, ethnicity etc. The most important aspect of the diversity and Unity is acknowledging and finding disparity that exists and implementing and focusing on policies that affect changes, ensuring on inclusivity.

Other speakers who spoke about peace and justice and unity in diversity were Linda Thomas – UN Ambassador to United Nations, Robert Garcia – Mayor of Long Beach, Kim Chha Hout – Honorary Consul General of Cambodia, Elizabeth Yang – an Attorney, Judith Harris, and Jasmin Sivakumaran. The program also included well-known artist, Stephen Day, who played Sarod, and Spanish and Nepali dancers who showed their cultural talent by performing the native dances.

RECEPTION OF MINISTER MURALEEDHARAN - INTERACTION WITH GOPIO AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTATIVES ON DIASPORA ISSUES:

A reception was organized by the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin Connecticut Chapter (GOPIO CT) along with the New York Indian Consulate in cooperation with other Indian community groups in Connecticut. GOPIO International Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, chaired the meeting and extended a warm welcome to Minister Muraleedharan. Dr. Abraham brought to the attention some of the Diaspora issue to the minister and also on avenues of cooperation to promote India all over the world.

Issues raised during the meeting included, violence against Indians in South Africa; post pandemic issues of Indian workers in the Middle East; Challenges for NRIs to open and operate bank accounts in India and the cumbersome technical problems faced while submitting application for OCI Cards, removing travel restrictions to India for people of Indian origin who are citizens outside India and issues relating to OCI card holders doing business in India, but are treated as foreigners in some areas where changed government rules such as the Biodiversity Act are affecting them. Another issue brought out was the banking regulations for the Indian diaspora living overseas.



“The ministry of external affairs wants to offer opportunities for every Indian abroad the right to vote,” the Minister said. However, the practical aspect of this major issue has several challenges. Pointing to the fact that Indians are spread over more in almost all 193 countries and coordinating the efforts and ensuring that all those who are eligible are given the opportunity to vote has been a major challenge, while assuring the Diaspora that he will address the issue

and follow with the concerned officials. The program ended with a vote of thanks by GOPIO-CT Executive Vice President Prasad Chintalapudi.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS HIGHLIGHTS BY EXCEL FOUNDATIONS USA:

Excel Foundations USA and Women's Wing (Women of India Network) conducted a Domestic Violence Awareness event on Friday 29, October 2021. The event coordinators were Rani Kuusto and Radhika Patel. The theme of the program was awareness, leading to action which transpires social change. The program was presented virtually. Charu Shivakumar, the Founder-President of Excel Foundations USA-a member organization of NFIA, spoke about the importance of bringing awareness to our Indian American Communities as well as to get the victims the necessary resources in time as it continues to be an issue of social stigma to seek help.

Rani Kuusto said that domestic violence is defined as when your current or former spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, someone you have a child in common with, someone you live(d) with, or someone you are related to through blood or marriage does one of the these, causes or attempts to cause you physical injury, sexually assaults you, makes you fear that you or another person is in danger of immediate, serious physical injury, molests, attacks, batters (uses force), or strikes you, stalks you, threatens or harasses you - either in person or through phone calls, emails, or other methods.

She concluded the speech by giving different resources available in the community from calling 911, available shelters numbers & calling the licensed social worker in the county the person resides. The keynote speaker was Kamlesh Chauhan who is a writer, poet, actress and community activist. Followed by her speech was a themed poetry read eloquently in Hindi by Rachana Srivastava who is a poet and a journalist.

Guest speaker Rami explained that the relationship between marriage partners and the importance of understanding between the partners. Ila Mehta emphasized the importance of understanding the need for help and supporting as it is culturally a sensitive issue. Radhika Patel emphasized that give and take and understanding one another's needs and wants in a relationship goes a long way to have a solid marriage. An interactive session followed and event also included songs presented by Harshad Patel, Samir Brahmabhatt, Rajeshwari Kulkarni, Jiten Patel, Naren Shah, Sabari Girish, Vidhya Murthi, Ramesh Thalli.

NIAASC, A MEMBER ORGANIZATION OF NFIA, HOLDS THEIR ANNUAL EVENT AND HONORS ITS CHAIRMAN:

Mr. Rajeshwar Prasad was honored on associations' annual event which was held in hybrid on November 7, 2021 by the current president of the association, Mrs. Gunjan Rastogi. The officers of the association shared enthusiastically its objectives and activities. Mrs. Gunjan Rastogi current Regional Vice President of NFIA and the President of The National Indo-American Association for Senior Citizens (NIAASC) welcomed members and guests to its 32nd Conference and 23rd Annual at the India Home in Jamaica, NY.



Mr. Rajeshwar Prasad stated, that "NIAASC helps Senior Citizens and Senior Associations through information, referral and advocacy services ". Mrs. Gunjan Rastogi, echoed the chairman's message and reaffirmed and reminded everyone that NIAASC is a unique nonprofit organization that provides resources for all the seniors while collaborating with other nonprofit organizations and this was well received and acknowledged. The occasion marked the honor and the lifetime award that was bestowed upon to Mr. Rajeshwar Prasad for his dedication and involvement for the Senior Citizens around the country.

Prominent speakers included Dr. Vikas Malik, board certified Adolescent and Adult Psychiatry and Dr. Swaminathan Giridharan, a Geriatric specialty and both these speakers provided valuable information to the audience in their respective fields. Lunch based on Vegan diet was provided to all attendees and was followed by a lively Diwali cultural program that regaled the audience with Bollywood songs and dances.

Several NFIA current executives and past presidents attended the event via zoom and included: former presidents, Subash Razdan, Sudip Gorakhshakar, and immediate past president, Angela Anand, and current president, Ajoy Dube, and current officers of NFIA, Dr. Hari Har Singh, Aparna Hande, Ashok Patnaik, Raj Razdan, Lavanya Reddy, and well-wishers and former officer, Anjali Sachdev amongst members and guests of the NIAASC association.

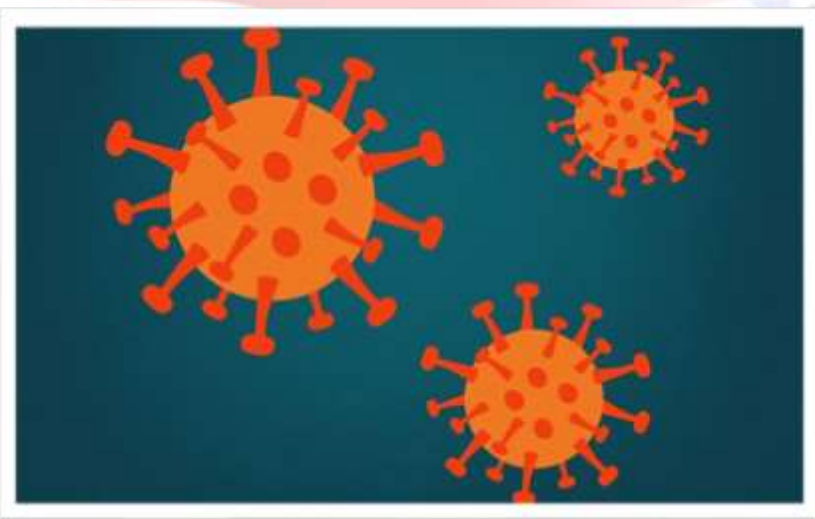
ONCE AGAIN COVID 19 U.S. CASES ARE ON THE RISE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 10 WEEKS IN U.S.:

The Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center maintains an ongoing count of the COVID-19 cases and deaths in the United States and worldwide. As of 2:33 p.m. on November 12, 2021, the tally is:

Total cases worldwide: 252,264,561 (up from 251,885,689 Thursday)

Total deaths worldwide: 5,084,373 (up from 5,079,013 Thursday)

Total cases in the United States: 46,886,129 (up from 46,763,694 Thursday) Total deaths in the United States: 759,921 (up from 758,592 Thursday)



According to USA Today analysis of Johns Hopkins University data reveals that new coronavirus infections are rising again in most states for the first time in two months, and deaths are rising in about half of U.S. states. Case counts were higher in 29 states than they were the week before. Most increases are being seen in the North. Vermont, which was an early leader in vaccinations, is recording some of its highest daily infections numbers. Florida, meanwhile, is reporting the lowest daily per-capita case count of any state.

NFIA is a 501c (3) association. NFIA's newsletter aims to inform and to mobilize the Indian American community nationally. It was founded four decades ago and has been continuing to work with the community organizations in large metropolitan areas of the United States. Your suggestions on topics of interest and NFIA's member organizations activities and projects can be featured here and circulated with the help of this communication tool.

Please let us know if you like to receive the newsletter by giving us your best email address. Editor: Angela Anand, angela_anand@yahoo.com Contributions to this issue were made by the following individuals. Contributing Members: GOPIO former treasurer and NFIA's Administrative Director II, Kewal Kanda, GOPIO International Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham; Vice President, Ashok Patnaik, NFIA Regional VP, Kamini Khare; Regional VP Gunjan Rastogi, Charu Shivkumar, president of Excel; President of IASC, Rajbir Husson; and Editor of NFIA newsletter, and former president of NFIA, Angela Anand; and also credited for information here are Everyday Health, John Hopkins data base and analysis of Covid done by USA today.