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## What Makes You Think Your Rights Are More Important Than My Rights?

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## What Makes You Think Your Rights Are More Important Than My Rights?

**By Roy Lenfest**  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, July 1, 2020

Is your choice to not wear a face covering more important than my right to a healthy space and environment?



(Photo by pinstock on iStock)

In these unique times we are all forced to look at things with a different perspective. For most reasonable people, this might also include a modicum of discomfort. I bring this up as a prelude to this thought: “What makes you think your rights are more important than my rights?”

Regardless of your political affiliation, race, ethnicity, creed or other self-proclaimed social identifier, here in America we are all supposed to be equal. In these times of social empowerment and change, let us not forget that equality means just that—equal.

Based on this equality theory, which has finally come to the forefront of the American psyche, if we are all truly equal, then what makes you think that your right to choose to not wear a face covering is more important than my right to a healthy space and environment? The face covering is primarily to protect others from your germs, not protect you from theirs.

We all celebrate our freedom of speech and assembly but we still aren't allowed to stand up in a crowded theater and holler "Fire!...", unless, of course, there actually is a fire. In this example, if people are injured or killed because of your freedom of speech, you are responsible for the outcome, criminally and civilly to both people and property. Likewise, not wearing a facial covering could make you an accessory to someone's death.

I am discouraged that many of our elected leaders are ignoring the federal guidelines to wear a mask, instead often deferring to gain favor with the electorate at the expense of the lives and health of individuals. No one wants to wear a bothersome face covering. No one. But that does not and should not give people a free pass to take any rights away from others.

I am disappointed with all the politicians who don't have the courage to require facial coverings and instead have a "Let's wait and see" attitude. This makes the "requirement" at least two weeks too late to be helpful in saving the lives of many people. If people are in a panic, it should not be because some of our elected leaders are so irresponsible as to avoid putting public health ahead of personal freedom. This isn't about economics. This is the look of the future, and people wanting to be elected need to act responsibly.

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It seems to be obvious that face coverings and social distancing work. The new spike in positive cases of COVID-19 since the excesses of Memorial Day at the beaches and elsewhere, as well as the recent mass demonstrations—often without either social distancing or face coverings—is undeniable proof of this. This most recent spike in positive test results, which is greater in numbers and locations than earlier this spring, seems to be coming from a younger demographic who may think they are invincible.

Another part of the problem is that someone can't know with certainty that they aren't spreading the virus. Some people are asymptomatic, and others can spread the disease for several days before they do show signs of being sick.

The older citizens of society, who are not only at seemingly higher risk of dying from the serious side effects of contracting the virus, are also the segment of society that has come to know their own vulnerabilities through a lifetime of experience.

Everyone—of all ages—should look in the mirror and realize the answers to many of today’s life-threatening problems are right there staring back at them.

Respect yourself. Start with the legacy of your own future, and the message that you will leave to society, the world, and your children, about how you should be and want to be treated through the years.

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