

Un-masking the anti-mask argument



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By Nate Smelle

What is it about the wearing of masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus that has provoked some people to ignore the fact that we are living amid a worsening pandemic?

Apparently the outrage caused by simply covering one's nose and mouth with a piece of cloth stems from the misguided belief that proactively protecting the health of others, and in turn yourself, is an infringement on our personal freedom.

Struggling to understand how anyone could be opposed to such a basic precautionary measure so obviously imposed for the sake of our survival, I decided to do a little research online and see where these anti-maskers are coming from.

Scrolling through social media to see who was posting and sharing information regarding the alleged "evils" of wearing a mask, I noticed that many of the culprits are the same folks who are often online calling for: more pipelines and less environmental regulations; the elimination of gun laws; less political sensitivity when it comes racism and discrimination; and, the "freedom" to take away a woman's right to choose. For the most part they also seem to be the same people denying humanity's fundamental role in accelerating the climate crisis.

Digging a little deeper into the accounts of these individuals so hell-bent on destruction, I also realized that they are also the same

pro-war anti-immigration crowd frequently online defending anti-Black, anti-Muslim, and anti-Indigenous racism under the guise of protecting our right to speak freely.

Spotting a theme among the social issues of importance for these individuals it occurred to me that they are not just anti-mask. Taking into consideration the absence of compassion within the views espoused by this self-centred mob, they seem to me to be a part of the much bigger and more dangerous movement. A movement that will stop at nothing to impose a way of life that destroys nature, culture and the future in the name of greed. In light of the endgame of this movement instead of identifying it with the defense of "freedom" I believe it would be more accurate to call it what it is ... the "pro-death movement."

Seeing a protest sign online from the recent anti-mask protest in Toronto that read "We will not be muzzled" I laughed in dismay as I wondered what corrupt and dysfunctional definition of "freedom" this selfish congregation of individualists was attempting to defend.

Would this same crowd take to the streets so passionately in defense of the planet? Would they ask more people to start using digital documents and sign them online using a software similar to [SodaPDF pdf signer](#), just to reduce the use of paper and in turn, prevent further deforestation? Would they put their lives on the line to defend universal health-care, eradicate hunger and poverty, or systemic racism?

If their allegiances online and in public reflect what it is they value, the answer is no.

Certainly no one likes being told what they have to do. But, when it comes to our survival as individuals, and a species we need to respect the collective voice of the scientific community. If we refuse to follow their lead, we do so at our own peril.