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## Don't Share Your Air

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Undercurrent by Ben Davison <maildist@undercurrent.org>  
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## Don't Share Your Air

If you're a diver chomping at the bit to travel off to tropical waters, but you are declining to wear a face mask and social distance, then you are preventing yourself, every other diver, and every world traveler from ever getting that chance. Don't share your air.

*Undercurrent* readers have been traditionally those divers who prefer to travel to warmer climes to go diving, but we're being stymied in our ambitions by the regulations of entry enforced by each foreign country. Many countries will not even allow us to enter, and the problem is worsening. We've yet to get a grip on control of the spread of the virus.

The US, with our notions of freedom of choice, is widely leaving it up to our citizens whether to wear masks and social distance. The crowded beaches, warm weather street parties, large gatherings, etc., indicate that many prefer not to. For this reason, cases of Covid-19 are increasing, and we are no longer welcome in countries that have better management and more conscientious citizens and slowed the spread of the virus.

A word about facemasks. Medics in operating theaters wear facemasks, not to protect themselves but to protect the vulnerable patient from any pathogens those medics might be carrying on their breath. The primary function of a facemask is not to protect the wearer but to protect those the wearer may encounter. People with Covid-19 can carry the infection for up to two weeks without being aware of it, yet they are still able to pass it to others.

Wear a mask as a form of altruism, which is the selfless concern for the well-being of others. Without it, society as we know it ceases to exist. For those who think the world revolves around only them, this may be difficult to grasp. Let's use a gun analogy. Some may think a gun gives them protection. It may be a deterrent. But would you fire off rounds indiscriminately? That is what you are doing if you mix with other people without wearing a mask. If you're unknowingly infected, you are firing off pathogens randomly. You may injure some and kill others. Are you happy to do that? Similarly, an infected person without a mask is doing that to you.

Wearing a mask is being part of the solution. It's not 'living in fear.' Society lives by many rules, and this should be one of them. Wearing a mask makes you considerate of other people. It reduces the number of people likely to be subject to the horror of being intubated, having lifelong effects, and maybe even dying in an IC ward. It's not a political statement. It's good sense. Stay away from those not wearing a mask. They may be as dangerous as someone with their finger on the trigger of a loaded assault rifle.

Covid-19 is a disease that is not yet fully understood. It affects the organs, primarily the lungs, but younger people who appear to have little or no symptoms may yet be found to be harboring health problems for later in life. We simply don't know. What we do know is that older folks – read people over 65, especially with other medical problems -- those who are overweight or obese, and those who are diabetic, are particularly vulnerable.

We heard recently of a dive boat captain in Southern California, who brought his vessel to a halt because one of the passengers had removed his facemask and refused to replace it. This is the sort of egotism that will make Americans the pariahs of international travel. The vessel lay dead in the water until the passenger complied with the rules. We need this sort of enforcement. You may be free to do as you wish but people should not be allowed to hurt others.

**Ben Davison**

[Contact Ben](#)

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