

By James Walker

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Masks? Somebody tell me, what is the problem just wearing one?

This is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year but I have never known the news to be so grim.

And I also have never known people to be so callous and have such disregard for the value of human life.

It certainly has been a tough year and we have had to do without, or alter, many of the traditions we have become accustomed to enjoying.

But if ever a crisis has exposed the selfishness of people and thrown into question what people are prepared to do for the greater good, the revolt against wearing a mask is your answer.

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But if ever a crisis has exposed the selfishness of people and thrown into question what people are prepared to do for the greater good, the revolt against wearing a mask is your answer.

And it is proving to be deadly.

Nearly 5,000 new COVID-19 cases were reported in the state on Thursday and the positivity rate has soared past 7 percent.

That should scare everyone as it is the highest Connecticut has seen since the coronavirus was declared a pandemic.

A vaccine may be on the way, folks, but until it arrives and well after, we remain under the threat of death with one known defense: a mask to protect us and others.

I don't know about anyone else, but I am frustrated with people who refuse to wear one in public even as COVID-19 surges deadlier than ever.

And I don't know why they refuse.

I may not have faith in drug manufacturers and remain skeptical of the medical community — but I believe in the science.

Science tells us wearing a mask helps prevent the spread of a virus that has so far killed more than 5,000 people here and more than 276,000 nationwide.

And the deaths continue to pile up as the U.S. set a record when 2,760 died on Wednesday and health care professionals are warning that deaths may exceed 300,000 before Christmas.

Anyone who doubts just how quickly and invisibly the particles of the coronavirus can spread through the air and into your nose, I suggest they do the following at-home experiment:

Pick up a pack of cherry Kool-Aid, open it up and pour it into a pitcher, just as you normally would when making the drink.

Then take a tissue and clean your nose. I am betting it will come back stained with red powder.

I am also betting you did not visibly see those red particles floating up toward your nose.

I get how people feel about wearing a mask because I hate wearing one, too. My glasses stay steamed, they make my face hot and sweaty and the longer I wear one, the more difficult it becomes to breath.

But to me, this is a small sacrifice to help save lives.

This is not a situation where I am injecting an unknown substance into my body and hope I am not in that percentage of people who react adversely to the medication.

We're setting records but not the kind for which we are going to stand in the winner's circle with a trophy held high.

Rather, those records will stand as testimony to the arrogance of people and once again display what happens to a society when "we" becomes "me."

We're in a race against time to save precious lives from the ills of COVID-19 but we're running out of breath.

The lines for food are long, evictions are being set up, businesses are failing, more than 600 restaurants have closed their doors and more than 6 percent are unemployed in Connecticut.

And people are dying.

Most of it is due to COVID-19.

So, what's it going to take to get people to strap on a mask and ride out these final grueling months?

Sometimes, it is the little things that drive home how bad a situation really is.

As I said in the beginning, this is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year — particularly for kids anxiously waiting for Santa.

Maybe readers haven't noticed, but COVID-19 has stalled Santa's sleigh as many annual toy drives and collections for low-income children also have fallen victim.

It is just another consequence of a tough year that some people just seem intent on making worse.

Masks? Somebody tell me, what is the problem?