

To Mask or Not to Mask
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I've always been considered a smart individual, but some of the 'advice' being given out by the CDC has caused me to wonder about the genius of these people. One day they say masks will help limit the spread of contagion, yet another report comes out saying that masks do little to no good. Who am I to believe when the same source offers conflicting reports?

Here at the George Beto Unit, it has become a 'criminal' offense to not wear our cloth masks when not in our cell. I question the legality of such measures, but that is neither here nor there. The last person I fear giving me the virus a second time is my neighbor and fellow offender. The one's I fear are those moving in and out the prison gates, who take part in the local lives of Anderson County and other nearby counties populations.

There is only 1 path the contagion can take to reach us: Officers. They walk around maskless, barking at us to put ours on or risk disciplinary procedures. Or, if they do wear one, they remove it to scream at us, once again about ours. Spittle flying in the air as they stand closer than 6 ft., we are left open and vulnerable to Corona Virus.

Scientists are continually releasing statistics saying that even the best masks do not fully stop the spread, and those the 95 masks. The worse the material, the more space there is for things to get through the miniscule holes of material like cotton. Considering all I am allowed is ill-breathing cotton, I might as well not be wearing a mask at all.

Then there is work considerations as well. It's one thing to walk for 2-3 minutes to the showers or chow hall. Even an hour or two standing in the commissary line or sitting in the dayroom is only mildly irritating; however, for working in a kitchen with NO A/C or air flow, a cotton mask pressed fully against the mouth for 10-14 hours is a no go. My work area is constantly 100° plus as my days are spent in front of the ovens. Were I to not buck the system there is an excellent chance that I would have passed out multiple times.

I think I have strong legal grounds to beat the mandatory mask wearing, but am not sure I want to go that route. Texas Governor Gregg Abbott has not even made mask wearing mandatory outside of counties with 20+ cases of the virus.

The Declaration of Independence guarantees me the God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. How much of these rights do I lose by being incarcerated? Then there is the 8th Amendment of cruel and unusual punishment. Forcing me to wear a mask that is virtually useless is both cruel and unusual.

We can't forget the other side of the coin: The State's argument. I am legally a slave, a ward of the State; the mask is for my protection and to protect others. The issue is a thorny one indeed.

While things progress or regress, I will do my best to wear a mask when ranking officers are around, and be civilly disobedient the rest of the time. So to answer the question of To Mask or Not to Mask is: Yes.