

Bunch of yahoos

by SHERALYN ROMAN

By now, we've all seen the video clips and pictures of the estimated thousands of people flocking to Toronto's Trinity Bellwoods Park this past Saturday to enjoy the warm weather and sunshine. Which in theory is fine, had they also all chosen to wear masks and practice social distancing. They did not. Bunch of yahoos.

I won't lie, I've about had it 'up to here' with folks preaching about how their civil liberties are being infringed upon. With the folks who continue to flagrantly, without any regard for their fellow persons, flout the recommendations of some of the best minds in the country. The advice that comes from medical doctors, top scientists and oh yeah 'the evidence from around the world of over 300,000 deaths and counting from the COVID-19 virus. These are the people who rather conveniently use words like 'civil liberties' without, one assumes, having ever looked up its definition. As a noun, civil liberty is 'the state of being subject only to laws established for the good of the community, especially with regard to freedom of action and speech.' How on earth then, does being asked to wear a mask while in public, infringe upon one's civil liberties? Choosing NOT to wear a mask, infringes upon MY civil liberties and those of every other person who lives, works and breathes the air. Every. Life. Matters. Not just yours park people! Everyone's rights matter and most certainly, your 'right' to choose whether you will wear a mask does not supersede our collective right to not get sick. Your choice becomes my illness, or that of my mother, a senior who hasn't felt the hug of her grandchildren in 73 days and is unlikely to feel it any time soon. Your choice to go without a mask undermines the work of thousands of front line workers who are putting their lives on the line, possibly even to save your sorry self when you contract the virus and end up in their care. If you truly believed in civil liberties 'you would know that donning a mask is for your own good AND for the good of community. In other words, it's actually not all about you but rather, understanding the role of civil liberty means you understand it's 'for the good of community.'

Growing up, one of my absolute fondest memories was watching my Nanna play the piano. She had beautiful hands and lovely, long, shaped nails, always painted in pretty spring colours. I admired those hands and from quite a young age tried to model myself after her. When I was finally allowed to grow my nails long and polish them (age 13, thanks Mum!) we would often do the activity together. To this day, as I take time out to 'pamper' my nails 'it's my Nanna I think of. One of the final acts I was able to do for her, as she lay in hospital dying, was to file and polish her nails and massage her hands with lotion. It was a sad but special moment. You know who doesn't get to have those special moments? Anyone currently in a medically induced coma with a ventilator shoved down their throat helping them breathe, while NOT ONE FAMILY MEMBER is allowed to be present, to comfort them or to hold their hand as they lay dying. It's a tragedy that is unfolding daily in hospitals all around us, and YOU can't wear a mask? My long nails and these special memories are a part of me but not so important that my 'need' to go to a salon, or a drugstore (wearing a mask) to buy nail polish is more important than anyone else's right to live.

Regular readers may, by now, know that while I have some fairly strong opinions I generally try to keep my tone respectful, that I sometimes resort to sarcasm to get my point across and that for most people, and in most things, I have the utmost respect. We all have our battles, our own individual challenges and one never knows just what another is experiencing so we must endeavour to avoid judgement as much as possible. This time however, I'm afraid I'm finding it quite difficult to 'tone it down.' COVID-19 is not an individual challenge 'it impacts us all. If in fact you non-maskers truly believe in civil liberties, then you must, by default, believe in supporting decisions that are for the greater good. Put on your damn masks you bunch of yahoos.