

The world's gone mad, or has it?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Sick of reading about the virus named after a beer? If you are, you might want to skip this column because I can't resist the temptation to talk about it. Everyone else is, why not me? And yes, I do know Corona Virus (CO-Vid 19) was not named after a beer but what an unfortunate (or fortunate who's to say) marketing situation for the actual beer named Corona, which just happens to be my beer of choice when I'm lucky enough to be beach side. Speaking of beaches, here are the real reasons I am writing about the corona virus, because all of my plans for beach related travel have gone belly up and I blame a world gone mad.

I'm not sure there has ever been a comparable situation to the one we are faced with now. Easy access to information; even easier access to misinformation, a very real threat to our health but not nearly as real a threat as Influenza A and Influenza B, and the total overreaction of populations around the world and yet, perhaps not an overreaction at all, all things considered. (I mean, clearly stocking up on toilet paper like it's a biblical apocalypse is an overreaction but washing your hands while you sing happy birthday isn't such a bad idea!) On the other hand, asking employees who can work remotely to stay home, asking folks not to come in to work sick and advising people on good hygiene practices are not bad ideas at all. Sure I'll admit I'm a little stunned we HAVE to remind people about good hygiene, having grown up assuming that adult humans know hand washing is a good idea but hey, little reminders never hurt anyone. Perhaps this will actually help to halt the spread of the virus before things do get out of hand ? unless of course you consider that over 100,000 cases worldwide qualifies as out of hand. I'll admit taking a cruise probably really isn't a good idea right now but what about in mid summer? Do you cancel your end of school vacation plans based on the possibility of the virus still being an issue? Do you cancel your March Break plans (for some, their only opportunity to travel) for a virus that is currently thought to have about a 3% mortality rate but a recent article in Time magazine suggests that how the virus is tested and how many people are being tested has a direct impact on that number and it could in fact be far lower? Like any flu, we also know that the impact is felt more significantly amongst populations that are older, or already at risk due to an underlying health condition. For those folks, good old-fashioned common sense might mean delaying your travel plans. Should healthy folks get on a plane and just take all reasonable precautions or should we ALL just stay home? It depends on whom you ask.

If your only source of information is facebook, not only should you stay at home but personally, I'd invest heavily in ?bubble boy? technology, ban visitors from your home by erecting an 8 ft perimeter fence with barbed and electrified wire on top and hang a sign that says ?Closed until Further Notice? over your door. If however, you rely on more reputable sources of information; like that of the World Health Organization or your local public health service agency, you might be more inclined to just be both vigilant and cautious. Maybe you do wear a mask if you decide to travel and wipe down the seats on the airplane. Why not? They get pretty grungy on the best of days. I can tell you that as a verifiable fact because I travel with a family member who has a ton of allergies and even without CoVid-19, travel has always presented a certain risk. We do wipe down the seats, handles, tray etc, with Lysol wipes and we DO get stared at when we do. I don't care I'm protecting a loved one and if you choose to travel right now and wipe down your perimeter ? if it makes you feel better go for it! If taking an extra precaution or two means you still get to travel so be it. I also respect the folks who choose not to travel however. Maybe they are influenced, as I was, by the threat of someone else getting sick resulting in you having to be quarantined ?in place? wherever that ?place? happens to be. Cruise ships are awesome should you ever have the opportunity to travel on one but being trapped in a tiny room for more than two extra weeks, in what is essentially a floating petri dish, sounds like a nightmare. If you have a loved one who is immuno-compromised, you might also make some different choices and that's ok. You do you. If only we all followed more of this advice and less of the fear-mongering and catastrophizing ? we'd all be a little bit better off.

Call me crazy but I mostly trust reputable news sources. I am fairly confident that I can rely on my public health agency to adequately advise me on an appropriate course of action during a crisis. Call me crazy again but I am equally sure that I should not rely on the advice of some of the folks currently storming local Costco outlets and buying toilet paper by the metric tonne. (I still don't understand that? CoVid-19 is not known to cause excessive pooping as far as I know!) If you rely on your own Dr. to give you medical advice and make reliably informed decisions based on what the actual experts are telling us to do then you haven't ?gone mad? even if the world around you has. If you DO choose to take a few extra precautions and delay travel plans that's not a bad thing

necessarily either. Who wants to get the flu anyway, any kind of flu? Flu sucks. I'd much rather be on a beach drinking Corona but it looks like that might have to wait awhile. I've got the flu. I'm not going anywhere.