

Share The Air

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Many years ago, I met a man who told me that when he returned to his home state of Hawaii from Vietnam in 1972, he found work tending a merchandise stand in the International Market, a popular tourist destination in Honolulu. One of the items for sale was a \$1 glass bottle labeled “Air from Hawaii.” Even though he laughed when he said that they came “pre-filled,” I still thought it was a pretty shady way to make a buck.

Aside from a souvenir shop scam, air is one of few things that can’t be sold. The legal definition of “air rights” refers only to the physical space directly above a structure; the air itself is not included. But people seem to assume that any air surrounding their body is “their” air. That was true for cigarette smokers before “no-smoking” sections became law. It’s still true of perfume consumers wearing their overpowering scents. It’s true of corporations that use our atmosphere as a trash can, contaminating it for us all. It’s true of those who make noise with boom-boxes, motorcycles, or ceaseless yakking, creating vibrating waves of air that our eardrums transmit to our brains as sound.

And now, the assumption of air ownership is claimed by people who believe that their Constitutional Liberty includes freely exhaling any particle that they have inhaled, even though it may contain a microbe that can be passed to, or from, others. To believe that this is your “right,” one has to believe that all of our air is yours to do with as you please, even though the laws of physics, nature, and ownership clearly state that it is not.

Unless it’s confined in a screw-cap bottle or in a tank of compressed oxygen, air is a shared resource that sustains Life. It’s not your possession guaranteed by Liberty, and it’s not a commodity included with your Pursuit of Happiness. It’s meant to be exchanged; not in a marketplace or trading floor, but between lobes and alveoli, passing through the airways of all living beings. When we swap our oxygen for carbon dioxide and back to oxygen, we trust that the presence of floating particulates will not kill us while we do.

I read a letter last week in this newspaper challenging the need to use face masks, and this one referred readers to a website called “questioningcovid.com.” Being a natural skeptic, I checked it out. Let me say that this website does not merit the word “question.” It begins by stating that “germ theory is a scientifically bankrupt

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paradigm based in warfare models of pathogenic invasion---to subdue the populace through coerced and forced bodily penetration.”

It essentially calls the pandemic a conspiracy; most of the articles question whether any virus is contagious or even causes disease, and that “No one has died from the Coronavirus.” One headline, “Covid—the new State Religion,” uses a photo of a Nazi general in the foreground. Much of the information offered is disinformation easily debunked by even the most cursory online search. You would need to be convinced that the entire global internet is a co-conspirator in the plot to hasten the extinction of the world as we know it, starting with humans.

But we don’t have to be stuck with just two options--- believing that everything is true, or that everything is a lie. Curiosity is good; we were given the intelligence, intuition, and common sense to question and challenge everything we’re told. Scientists always question (known) science; that’s their job. But outright denial is generally not motivated by wisdom, but by wishful thinking that satisfies personal bias.

Simply put, the need to wear a mask is intended to prevent each of us from committing biological warfare on our fellow humans. Compared to injecting a pharmaceutical substance developed at “Warp Speed” into your bloodstream and which makes even the most trusting person hesitant to accept it---masking is cheaper, easier and safer, even if the absolute benefits are yet to be 100% scientifically proven.

And so it is with the bottle of breeze from Hawaii--- maybe it was, and maybe it wasn’t. A skeptic would know that the likelihood of the contents actually being from Oahu is iffy, and short-lived upon opening. They might buy it because it’s so funny.

Now, what became of that guy selling it to tourists on Waikiki beach? He may have been a good salesman, but no one could have sold me such a ridiculous thing. However, I did end up marrying him, and 42 years later, we’re still laughing at the idea of selling air from anywhere. It’s our private metaphor for people who will believe anything, or believe nothing---just like today. Either way, I’m storing gallon jugs filled with air from West Virginia in my crawl space. I just hope the containers don’t leak.

But if they do, we’ll share that last \$1 bottle of “Air from Hawaii.”