

"LIFE BEHIND A MASK"

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ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

To the Editor:

In breathing, we typically inhale a fair amount of airborne pollutants floating in the atmosphere, along with oxygen and other gasses that constitute air. The pollutants can include dust particles, chemical pollutants, motor-vehicle exhaust, and free-floating

bacteria and viruses. Some will be breathed right back out with the next breath. Some will gain further access up the nasal passages but will normally be trapped by the mucus membrane linings and worked back out over time to eventually be expelled through simple exhales or occasionally more forceful nose-blowing.

That process of expulsion goes on even after we don a mask, but the expelled matter now collects on the inner surface of the mask, fouling it, so that now some of that waste is breathed back into the lungs. O_2 and CO_2 travel through the masks fairly freely, but some small amount is nonetheless blocked by the mask material. Over time, for example the now three years we have had these mask mandates to put up with, we have been paying the price with some indeterminate measure of reduced health. This is in addition to the other harms imposed by the lockdowns, closures, lost jobs, vaccine-adverse events (a minute percentage of which has been tallied in the CDC's Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System) and other restrictions we've been subjected to, to say nothing of the psychological damage inflicted on the population, from the very young to the very old. Were these overreactions worth it? Have they reduced deaths? Statistics from other states, countries, and entire continents that have not locked down belie that notion.

David Barouh