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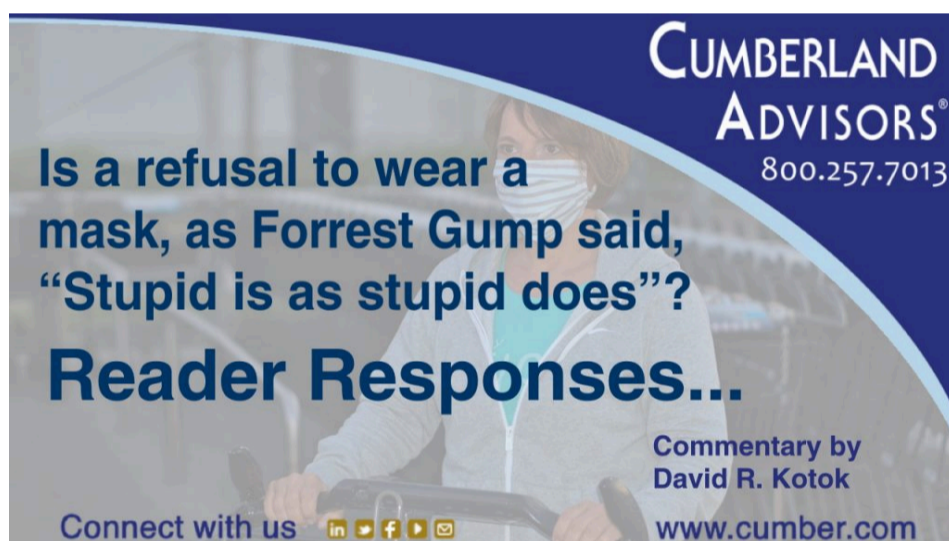
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## Forrest Gump Responses

David R. Kotok

Fri Jun 26, 2020

We've been compiling responses to our commentary on Forrest Gump's advice. For those who missed it, here's the link: <https://www.cumber.com/cumberland-advisors-commentary-forrest-gumps-advice/>. Now some quotes from readers.



Bruce wrote:

“Thanks for your Forrest Gump moment. Your most revealing sentence in all of this missive is ‘people are now required to take full responsibility for their own personal safety’, seems like adults should live by that sound advice in everyday life, not just during a pandemic. I assume from that statement you believe the ‘state’ is responsible. This makes me believe you would be more at home in china or russia, so why are you ‘tolerating’ the american way of life in florida. ‘stupid is as stupid does’ just shows how our state and federal governments have for years ‘dumbed down’ the us educational system so everybody graduates, no one fails. If you really want adults to be responsible for their own safety write articles about our failing educational system from grade school thru high school, but that’s ‘government responsibility!’”

Peter Gold is vice-chairman of the Global Interdependence Center (GIC) and has a distinguished career in the Philadelphia region in both law and education. He calls things as he sees them. He wrote:

“After speaking with the people who I was told are leading the contact tracing efforts in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania I am convinced that both Democrat and Republican leaders by their inactions or mistakes have de facto united on the calculation, whether intentionally or not, that 10,000 to 20,000 deaths a month nationally in the next few months is acceptable. A good percentage of these deaths, maybe even the majority, could be avoided by an effective contact-tracing effort. As a Philadelphian I ask, where are the City Council Hearings? Where is the Pennsylvania legislature? In my opinion this default to ineffective efforts to try to trace may be a criminal activity. As an attorney it is also my view that, while it would be a ‘novel’ case for sure, a cause of action might exist in civil liability claims for money and punitive damages that may not be protected by sovereign immunity. Government(s) have a duty to protect; there is a tried and true method to do that. Government(s) have failed in that duty, and as a direct consequence, hundreds, if not thousands, have and will die or become sick. To me, it’s like the government knows that a dam is breaking and won’t or can’t take measures to either fix it or move the population which will be decimated by its breach, even though measures are doable. Our population and our economy need immediate action. Who is the people’s champion on this life-and-death issue?”

Peter and his brother Jeffrey Gold sent the following note. Dr. Jeffrey Gold is Chancellor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center, a major American institution that is currently intensively involved in research on COVID-19. Readers with time may wish to learn more about UNMC.

The two Gold brothers wrote:

“David, my brother Dr. Jeffrey Gold and I would like to jointly reply to your ... commentary of yesterday. We welcome further discussion. This is our joint response.

“... you set out the case for masks and social distancing. In addition to those cited by you, there are other reputable reports and studies which show that in the U.S., masks and social distancing can save between 15,000 to 30,000 lives in the next few months alone.

“Our response is our clear and loud call to further action by more of us. Respectfully, we need to more loudly talk about the personal tolls and stories of some of those and their families who are affected by the virus. We need to bring it home. It is not just something seen on our favorite screens. Knowing the real life pain and agony of some whose illness could have been avoided is very powerful, is honest, and might move the meter. To many, the virus is invisible and will only hurt those who are in nursing homes, health care workers, or other ‘elderly.’

“As you know, David, nothing can be further from reality. If people don’t know someone who is or was sick or died then they sure know what has happened to the economy of the US and the world. They are or will be directly affected by that. But, regrettably, the numbers, statistics and reports won’t materially move the meter in getting an indifferent, untrusting, or recalcitrant group to change behaviors and use masks as a tool to combat the enemy. Rational arguments are important, but observing and feeling personal anguish is also convincing as part of a reality education process.

“Please let us share these unexaggerated true experiences with a hope that they will be retold. An emergency room nurse here in Arizona tells about a woman in her sixties whose husband took her to COVID emergency at one of the hospitals. When admitted, she was separated from her loved one, spent several days trying to breathe and contemplating her death — in fear of her death. Eventually she was put on a ventilator and died. She did this ALONE with no family and loved one present, and her husband and family could not say goodbye.

“A Philadelphian shared that he knows someone who was very sick with COVID and who was put on a ventilator for 5 days— again all alone — and was fortunate to come off the ventilator and was eventually discharged. However, his respiratory system was damaged by the virus and ventilator and he now requires respiratory therapy, has not regained even enough strength to interact with his kids for more than minutes at a time.

“An elderly women drove through the night to get her feverish and breathless husband of sixty-six years to the physicians at a rural hospital, only to realize that he had quietly passed away during the long drive. She was also ill, admitted to the hospital, and died several days later, alone.

“A middle-aged man in hospice care, with a strong desire to join his family just once more and walk his daughter down the aisle, lost his ability to cling to life after the wedding was postponed due to the pandemic. The very same family could not be with him in his last days or gather together to share their grief.

“A young emergency medicine physician practicing in the New York City pandemic epicenter served in the very front lines of care and caring. The magnitude of the endless patients, the tragedy of the seemingly endless loss of life, and the sense of helplessness caused her to take her own life.

“We respectfully ask everyone to listen to and retell the personal stories. Listen to the expressions of human pain this COVID-19 is causing and understand that wearing a mask—you , your family members, co-workers, social colleagues—is a relatively easy and very powerful barrier to the disease and spreading it. In this world of uncertainty where individually we are mostly powerless to change and influence many things, wearing a mask is a big exception. It is certain that if more of our population took personal responsibility and wore masks, we would dramatically cut the spreading and stop the pain for many.”

Kevin added politics:

“Thanks for sending this out. While I did not vote for Trump in the last election, I \*had\* become a supporter over the years based on seeing someone run the country more like a business than a social entity. The strength of the economy had brought me beyond the day to day annoyance of his often socially incorrect communications. I was thinking he was doing as good as anyone could in managing this pandemic, with one big exception. He should be pushing for mask wearing and setting an example. Because he has not taken this scientifically proven measure to limit the pandemic, Trump has lost my vote.”

R.R. wrote:

“Really disappointed in your view and opinion about Trump. Interesting that you only share these articles about Pence. How about the thousands of protesters and thugs that are out there like sardines, likely spreading the virus, and the radical Left mayors and governors allowing it... never mind allowing the destruction and stealing of anyone’s property! I suppose you support the radical left path forward, socialism and what it will do to the lives that we worked hard to build.”

Many thanks to the folks who responded. There were dozens of replies, which I tried to answer with at least a thank you.

Now, here's mine.

There is absolutely no doubt that wearing of masks and social distancing coupled with contact tracing are a robust way to reduce infections. Why do we make these behaviors a political statement? Why? The virus doesn't know if you are a Democrat or a Republican; the virus doesn't care if you like Biden or Trump.

But the 330 million people of the United States are watching what was going to be a "flattening of the curve" with diminishing waves (second and third each smaller than the first) become a spiking of the curve with a continuous expansion.

"I think this is more like a forest fire," said Dr. Michael Osterholm, the director for the Center of Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, on NBC's "Meet the Press." He concluded: "I don't think this is going to slow down. I'm not sure the influenza analogy applies anymore" – referring to a report he and colleagues authored in April, using influenza pandemics as a model for understanding the coronavirus. "I think that wherever there's wood to burn, this fire is going to burn it." He added, "I don't think we're going to see one, two, and three waves — I think we're just going to see one very difficult forest fire of cases." He also called for a more unified national structure for dealing with the virus, rather than a patchwork of states using various strategies and reopening plans. "We have not really gotten the message across to the public yet that this is a very serious issue," he said. "We can't shut down the economy, but we can't suddenly say we're done with it."

We cannot shut the economy for three years. Most agree on that. We also cannot pretend COVID-19 is over. Most agree on that. National, frequent, accurate testing for the disease and for antibodies is critical and needed. Most agree on that.

So, if most agree on these basic elements, why don't we have them?

Investors, do you want the stock market to go up? Insist that we have effective measures in place to manage and put out the forest fire of infection. Entrepreneurs, do you want to reopen your businesses? Insist that we have them. Nonprofits, do you want to have donors and to offer community services? Insist that we have them. Religious organizations, do you want to hold services and open schools? Insist that we have them. Labor unions and non-union workers, do you want jobs and income? Insist that we have them.

What are these critical elements of effective response? Universal and accurate disease testing, mask-wearing, contact tracing, antibody testing, and social distancing.

Insist that we have them.

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