

Be a hero



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

You can be a hero. How? Protect others, not just yourself. We are a union, and unions protect the collective rights of the many. So quit thinking about yourself and ask: How do your actions affect your brothers and sisters on the workroom floor, and how does your behavior affect your community and your family? COVID-19 is not a joke, and it is not a hoax.

The world we live in is under attack by a virus of epic proportions. The magnitude of this pandemic has not been experienced since the early 1900s, and lessons learned then should have been the starting point to better our chances for survival. Instead, the mouth that roars manipulates each and every aspect of how

the United States responds and acts. Moving the economy forward was more important than saving lives.

As I draft this month's column, the Johns Hopkins University COVID-19 Dashboard shows more than 28 million global cases and more than 900,000 global deaths. The United States shows more than 6.4 million cases and 191,500 deaths. This is not the common flu, as some have suggested, and this will not go away by magic.

Scientists, medical professionals, infectious disease experts and the collective body of truth related to COVID-19 will find a solution with time. Until then, it is up to you to do your part.

In a recent conversation with Tony Bossi, a letter carrier from Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25, he shared some thoughts on the subject of Spartacus:

Asked why it was dishonorable to return without a shield and not without a helmet, the Spartan king Demaratus (510 491) is said to have replied: 'Because the latter they put on for their own protection, but the shield for the common good of all.'

The Spartans battled in a formation called a phalanx. The key to the phalanx success was the shield. Soldiers would advance in tight formation with their shields on their left arm. The shield would protect not only the soldier carrying it, but also the soldier to their left. Spartans understood that one individual soldier could not win a battle alone. It took the entire army to defeat their enemy. Many enemies were defeated while employing this cooperative technique.

Today, we are faced with the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without a cure or a vaccine, we are left with few weapons to fend off this threat. We do have our own modern day phalanx, and that is maintaining social distancing. Our shields are not

made of wood and bronze, instead they are made of cloth. They are not carried on our left arm, but worn over our mouths and noses. They are face masks, scarves and gaiters. Although some may debate the personal freedom they claim to be surrendering by wearing a mask, science makes clear that wearing a mask for the common good



Kirk Douglas as Spartacus in the 1960 film of the same name

is the honorable thing to do.

Thank you, Tony.

Earlier this week, news broke on the subject of a series of 18 interviews of President Trump, by journalist and author Bob Woodward.

We have been hearing the president downplaying the pandemic while hospitals were strained beyond their safe capacity. We heard him mock the precautions that were recommended from medical professionals, and we saw him bench Dr. Anthony Fauci. Why? It is clear that POTUS wants business to grow and continue so that he can pat himself on the back while putting you, your family and your community at risk.

President Trump specifically answered the following to a question from Woodward during a Feb. 7 interview:

It goes through air, Bob. That's always tougher than the touch. You know, the touch, you don't have to touch things. Right? But the air, you just breathe the air and that's how it's passed... This is more deadly. This is 5 percent versus 1 percent. So this is deadly stuff.

The president has known all along that COVID-19 is spread through the air. He has refused to issue any orders that would require the wearing of a face covering. He has belittled those who wear face coverings. His actions put you, your family and your community at risk.

Earlier this year, I wrote about the silence and inaction of the U.S. Department of Labor with regard to enforcing federal regulations relating to infectious diseases, in spite of its mission, which includes responsibility for occupational safety. The current administration's team of agency leaders is not interested in protecting you as an employee in a work force. They are protecting employers.

It's time to protect employees. Put on your shields. Draw your pen, as it is mightier than the sword, and vote in November. We need representatives at every level who will protect employees from unsafe working conditions.