

CENSORSHIP CAN BE DEADLY

Censorship can be deadly. Freedom of speech is always important, but it is especially important during a national emergency such as a pandemic. No authority is infallible, and when a new virus emerges, it is impossible for politicians and public health officials to get things right without listening to discussions between a wide cast of scientists with different areas of expertise and thoughts.

I am an epidemiologist, a biostatistician and a professor of medicine at Harvard, on leave. For over two decades I have done research on the detection and monitoring of infectious disease outbreaks and on the safety evaluation of vaccines and drugs. I helped build the nations disease surveillance systems. Despite this, I was censored and black listed during the pandemic, by Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook.

In early 2020, we already knew from Wuhan data that there is more than a thousand-fold difference in Covid mortality between the old and the young¹. During the pandemic, we failed to adequately protect older Americans while school closures and other lockdown measures generated enormous collateral public health damage that we now must live with, and die from, for years to come.

During the spring of 2020, Sweden was the only major Western country to keep schools and daycare open for children ages 1 to 15. Among those 1.8 million children, there were zero covid deaths and the covid risk for teachers were less than the average of other professions². This showed that it was safe to keep schools open. It was important for America to know that, but a July 2020 New England Journal of Medicine article on school closure did not even mention Sweden³. That's like reporting on a new medical treatment without including information from the comparison control group.

Unable to publish my thoughts about the pandemic in US English language media, in the summer of 2020 I used my Twitter account to share the Swedish data and argue for open schools. But in July 2020, Twitter put me on their "trends blacklist" to limit the reach of my open school posts⁴.

In October 2020, I authored the Great Barrington Declaration with two fellow epidemiologists, Dr. Sunetra Gupta at Oxford and Dr. Jay Bhattacharya at Stanford⁵. We argued for better protection of high-risk older people while keeping schools open and letting young people live more normal lives. This was shadow banned by Google and censored by Reddit⁶. After posting in favor of prioritizing the elderly for vaccination, our Facebook page was "unpublished". (Figure 1)

In March 2021, Twitter censored a post when I wrote that *"Thinking that everyone must be vaccinated is as scientifically flawed as thinking that nobody should. COVID vaccines are important for older high-risk people and their care-takers. Those with prior natural infection do not need it. Nor children."* Twitter falsely claimed that the tweet was misleading, and it could not be replied to, shared or liked. We have known about infection-acquired immunity since the Athenian Plague in 430 BC, and the questioning, denial and censoring of such natural immunity is the most stunning denial of scientific facts during the pandemic.

¹ Kulldorff M. [COVID-19 Counter Measures Should be Age Specific](#). LinkedIn, April 10, 2020.

² Public Health Agency of Sweden. [Covid-19 in schoolchildren – A comparison between Finland and Sweden](#), July 7, 2020.

³ Levinson M, Cevik M, Lipsitch M. [Reopening Primary schools during the Pandemic](#). New England Journal of Medicine, July 29, 2020.

⁴ Bhattacharya J. [What I discovered at Twitter headquarters](#), UnHerd, December 22, 2022.

⁵ Bhattacharya J, Gupta S, Kulldorff M. [Great Barrington Declaration](#), October 4, 2020.

⁶ Young T. [Why can't we talk about the Great Barrington Declaration?](#) The Spectator, October 17, 2020.

With deadly consequences. At a time when vaccines were in short supply, we were vaccinating young adults and people with natural immunity, who did not need it, before many older Americans whose lives could have been saved by it. (Figure 2)

Through randomized studies and reviews^{7 8}, we know that face masks provide only marginal or no protection against Covid. A randomized study in Denmark showed no significant benefit⁹ while a Yale University study conducted in Bangladesh showed a reduction between 0 and 18 percent¹⁰. It is then dangerous to make older high-risk Americans believe that masks will protect them when they will not, as they may go to crowded restaurants or super markets thinking that their mask is keeping them safe. In May 2021 I was temporarily suspended by Twitter for three weeks for writing that: *“Naively fooled to think that masks would protect them, some older high-risk people did not socially distance properly, and some died from Covid19 because of it. Tragic. Public health officials/scientists must always be honest with the public”*. (Figure 3)

Twitter also censored me for quoting and linking to an article about masks written by an Associate Professor of Black Studies at the University of California. (Figure 4)

In April 2021 I participated in a scientific roundtable hosted by Florida governor Ron DeSantis. This roundtable was censored by YouTube after being posted by a CBS affiliated television station in Florida¹¹. YouTube is owned by Google.

Many nurses were infected while heroically taking care of covid patients, and some of them were later fired for not taking a vaccine even though they had stronger immunity than the vaccinated. In October 2021, I wrote an article urging hospitals to hire instead of fire nurses with natural immunity, as they are the least likely to infect older frail patients¹². That was censored by LinkedIn, which is owned by Microsoft¹³. Hospitals and nursing homes could have better protected patients if they had actively hired personnel with infection acquired immunity. That would have saved lives.

LinkedIn censored me multiple times, one other example being a repost of an interview with the chief epidemiologist of Iceland^{14 15} (Figures 5-9). That is, LinkedIn did not only censor public health academics but also government public health officials that did not conform to LinkedIn's view on the pandemic.

⁷ Jefferson T, et al. [Physical interventions to interrupt or reduce the spread of respiratory viruses](#). Cochrane Library, January 30, 2023.

⁸ Liu AT, Prasad V, Darrow JJ. [Evidence for Community Cloth Face Masking to Limit the Spread of SARS-CoV-2: A Critical Review](#), Cato Working Paper, November 8, 2021.

⁹ Bundgaard H, et al. [Effectiveness of Adding a Mask Recommendation to Other Public Health Measures to prevent SARS-CoV-2 Infection in Danish Mask Wearers: A Randomized Controlled Trial](#). Annals of Internal Medicine, November 18, 2020.

¹⁰ Abaluck J, et al. [Impact of community masking on COVID-19: A cluster-randomized trial in Bangladesh](#). Science, December 2, 2021.

¹¹ Wilson K, Ross A. [YouTube removes video of DeSantis coronavirus roundtable](#). Tampa Bay Times, April 9, 2021.

¹² Kulldorff M. [Hospitals Should Hire, not Fire, Nurses with Natural Immunity](#). Brownstone Institute, October 1, 2021.

¹³ [Harvard Epidemiologist Censored by LinkedIn for Defending Healthcare Jobs](#). Brownstone Institute, October 4, 2021.

¹⁴ [LinkedIn Censors Harvard Epidemiologist Martine Kulldorff](#), Brownstone Institute, August 12, 2021.

¹⁵ Tucker JA. [Kulldorff Deleted: Famed Epidemiologist and Early Opponent of Lockdowns Banned by LinkedIn](#), Brownstone Institute, January 28, 2022.

As a leading expert on vaccine safety, CDC asked me to serve on their COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Technical Work Group. In April 2021, CDC fired me from that group¹⁶. If you think I was fired for questioning the vaccines, you are wrong. I am probably the only person fired by CDC for being too pro-vaccine. On April 13, 2021, CDC paused the Johnson & Johnson vaccine after reports of blood clots in a few women under age 50. There were no reported cases among older people, who benefit the most from the vaccines. Since there was a general vaccine shortage at the time, I argued in an op-ed in The Hill that the vaccine should not be paused for older high-risk Americans¹⁷. That got me fired, although CDC did lift the pause four days later. Tragically, some older Americans died because of this vaccine “pause”.

The primary victim of censorship is not me and others being censored, but the public. As politicians, to properly serve your constituents, you have both the right to hear from and a duty to listen to a range of scientists. The public also has that right. For example, how many of you knew that Sweden kept their schools open in the spring of 2020 without a single covid mortality among its 1.8 million children? How many of you know now, that for 2020-20202 Sweden focused protection strategy led to the lowest excess mortality among western countries?¹⁸ Censorship deprives both you and the public from vital information needed to save lives.

Censorship inevitably leads to self-censoring. Some of my public health colleagues did not speak up for fear of being censored, silenced or slandered, like I was. I don't blame them. I was also forced to self-censor, to avoid being permanently banned from social media. (Figure 10)

I have a question for you: Do we have freedom of speech because of the First Amendment or do we have the First Amendment because freedom of speech is important to preserve society and life?

When the Bill of Rights was written, Americans had lived through troubled times. They did not use that as an excuse for censorship. I think they understood that freedom of speech is especially important during difficult times when difficult decisions must be made. I hope that the 118th Congress is just as wise as the 1st Congress was when it adopted the First Amendment as part of the Bill of Rights.

Thank you for listening.

Martin Kulldorff

¹⁶ Pullman J. [CDC Punishes ‘Superstar’ Scientist For COVID Vaccine Recommendation The CDC Followed 4 Days Later](#), The Federalist, April 28, 2021.

¹⁷ Kulldorff M. [The dangers of pausing the J&J vaccine](#). The Hill, April 17, 2021.

¹⁸ Simmons M. Sweden, [Covid and ‘excess deaths’: a look at the data](#). The Spectator, March 10, 2023.

FIGURES



Figure 1: Tweet with Screenshot of “Unpublished” Facebook Page.



Figure 2: Twitter, March 2021



Options ▾

We've temporarily limited some of your account features



Martin Kulldorff
@MartinKulldorff

What happened?

We have determined that this account violated the [Twitter Rules](#). Specifically, for:

1. [Violating the policy on spreading misleading and potentially harmful information related to COVID-19.](#)
We understand that during times of crisis and instability, it is difficult to know what to do to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. Under this policy, we require the removal of content that may pose a risk to people's health, including content that goes directly against guidance from authoritative sources of global and local public health information.

For more information on COVID-19, as well as guidance from leading global health authorities, please refer to the following links:
[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public from the WHO](#)
[FAQs about COVID-19 from the WHO](#)



Martin Kulldorff
@MartinKulldorff

Naïvely fooled to think that masks would protect them, some older high-risk people did not socially distance properly, and some died from #COVID19 because of it. Tragic. Public health officials/scientists must always be honest with the public. <https://t.co/xNENooBV1a>

Figure 3: Twitter, May 2021



Martin Kulldorff @MartinKulldorff · Nov 5, 2021

...

"Masks are symbols of submission
Masks are the lurid fetish of power
Masks lead to the erasure of personhood
Masks promote a culture of fear
Masks are deterrents of solidarity"

- Roberto Strongman, Assoc Prof of Black Studies, [@ucsantabarbara](#)
1/3

⚠ Misleading

Learn about the preventive measures health officials recommend to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection. [Find out more](#)

This Tweet can't be replied to, shared or liked.



[brownstone.org](#)

The Mask of Your Enslavement: The Image, History, and Meaning of E...
Anastásia reminds us of certain transhistorical constants in the process of dehumanization and enslavement of populations

Figure 4: Twitter, November 2021

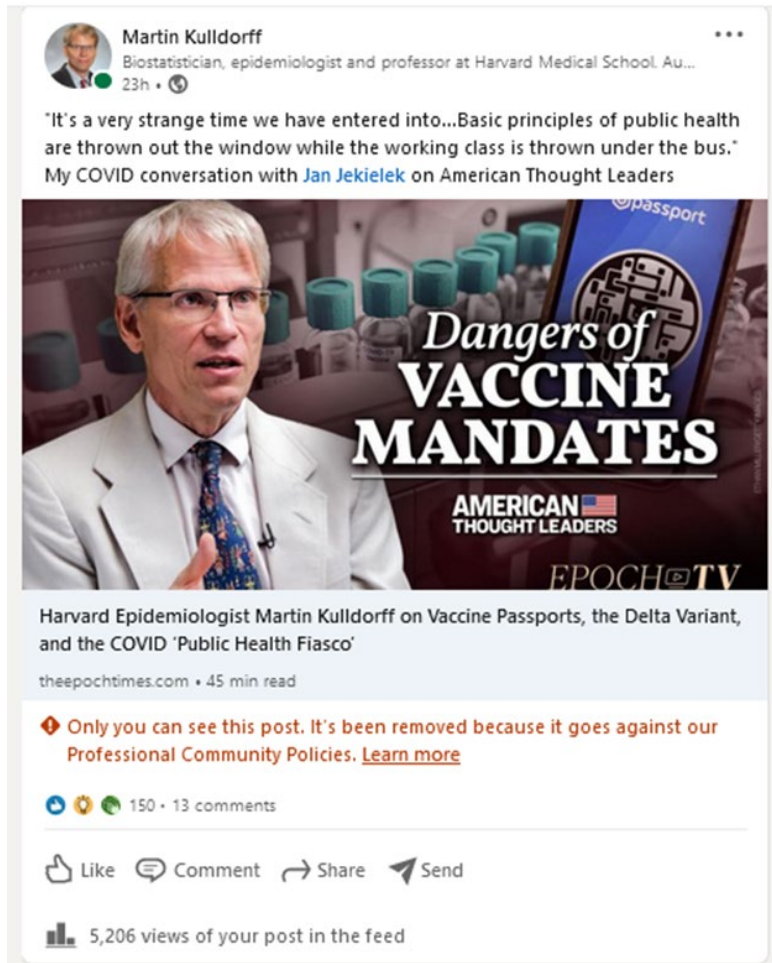


Figure 5: LinkedIn, August 2021

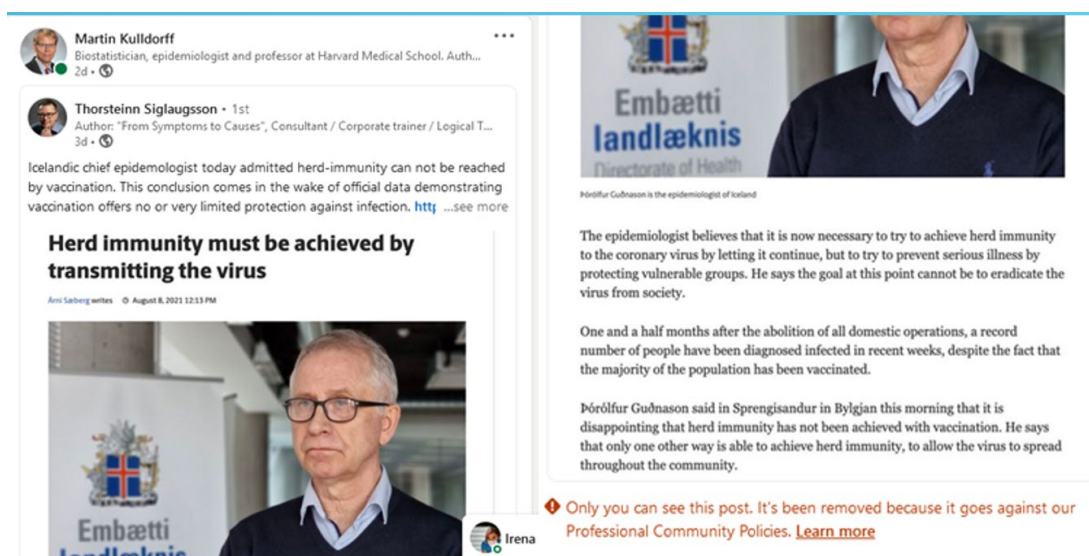


Figure 6: LinkedIn, August 2021

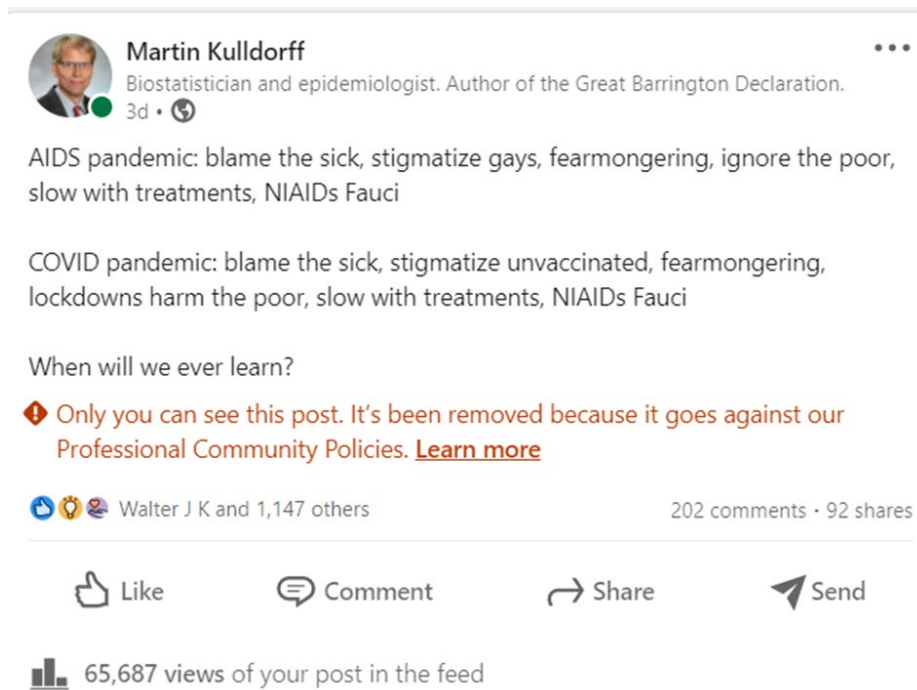


Figure 7: LinkedIn, January 2022

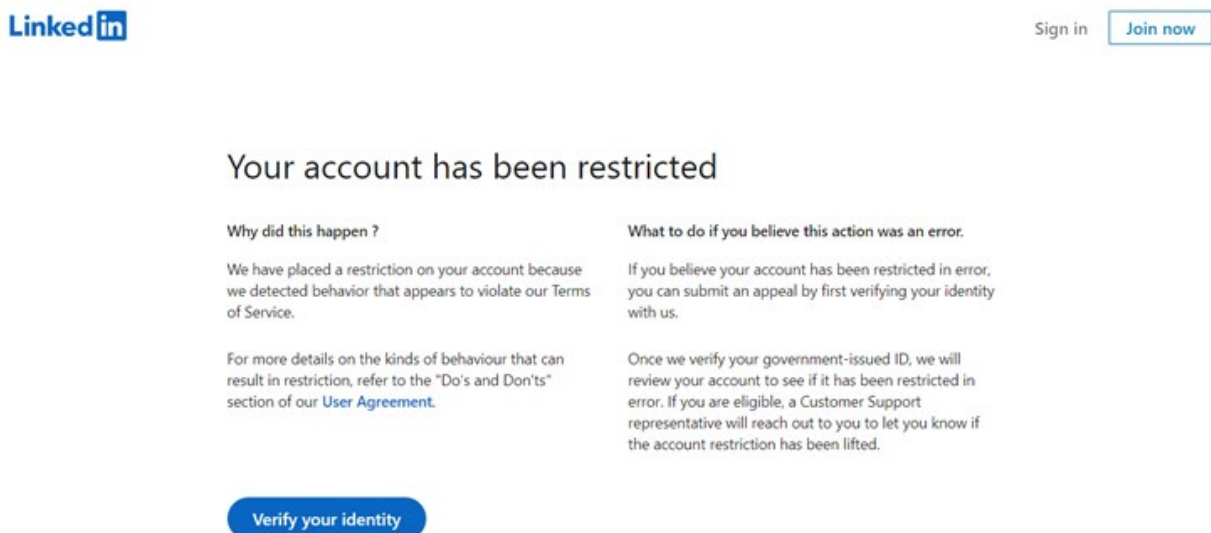


Figure 8: LinkedIn, January 2022



Figure 9: LinkedIn, Last Post Before Account Suspension, January 2022



Figure 10: Twitter, March 15, 2022