Del Bigtree
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Del Bigtree
Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. Wherever you are out there in the world, it's time to step out onto The HighWire. You know, we talk about it a lot here on The HighWire that at the center of all of science is really the scientific method. What does that mean? It means dialog. It means discussion. It means debate. Any idea should be allowed to be challenged. In fact, anything in science should demand the challenge, should want the challenge, but that just hasn't been the case for the last several years when it comes to the COVID pandemic, and when it comes to the discussion of vaccines, it's non-existent. No one will have a debate. In fact, I was set up to be a part of a debate that was going to take place back in 2018 called One Conversation.

Del Bigtree
All the doctors were lined up to have the conversation, and then they bailed out three days ahead of time. It looked like this. We staged it anyway, and we tried to make the arguments that they would have made for them. We were told the AMA, the CDC got involved and they all took off. Well, then in 2019, Robert Kennedy Jr was invited to Connecticut. They were going to be voting on a law to remove the religious exemption, and so some Yale doctors and scientists said that they would debate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., here's what that looked like when we reported on it.
I got really excited last week when I found out that Representative Josh Elliott in Connecticut was going to host a debate. Now, I've talked about this over and over again, how many times we've tried to have a debate. So Bobby called Josh Elliott before he got on the plane and said, look, I'm a really busy guy, so I just want to make sure, this thing's on, right, it's a go? It's a go, Bobby. Get out here. Tomorrow, you're going to be on a panel with four other Yale scientists. Well, guess what? Yale bailed. That's it. Yale bailed out. They couldn't handle the likes of Bobby Kennedy.

State Rep. Vincent Candelora
We are going to embark on a potential elimination of a religious exemption without the ability of the public to come in and give their side of the story. So this morning, there was a forum scheduled where we would have had both sides of the issue present their information. And unfortunately, the other side of the issue arrogantly did not show up.

[00:03:08] Robert F. Kennedy Jr
I grew up with the, just the axiom that you can't have a democracy if you don't have free debate. That free debate, no matter how controversial the issue, you got to have free debate.

Del Bigtree
Well, since then, I've had a little bit more success, if you've been watching The HighWire. Of course, I debated Alan Dershowitz, the incredibly famous and talented lawyer on the COVID vaccine. And then just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to debate Neil deGrasse Tyson on COVID, the pandemic, and some of the issues around the vaccine there. But I would say, just last week, this whole vaccine debate conversation went to a stratospheric level. Millions of dollars now involved in the idea of a debate. What am I talking about? You must have been under a rock if you missed what happened when Robert F. Kennedy Jr appeared on the Joe Rogan show. Take a look at this.

Jesse Watters
RFK Jr was on the Joe Rogan podcast and the discussion turned to vaccines.

Briahna Joy Gray
They talked about COVID, controversial treatments, and called the vaccine into question.

Dan Cohen
Obviously, Robert F. Kennedy Jr is a threat to the establishment and starts this incredible twitter storm.

Joe Rogan
I had a maddening conversation with Peter Hotez once.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr
Oh he's, that guy is, I mean it's hard just watching the guy sit there and tell things that he's got to know are not true.

Joe Rogan
I don't know if he knows they're not true, but he's a strange example. Because when I was talking to him, he's overweight and I asked him, does he eat well? He doesn't. He's saying, you know, he likes junk food, he eats junk food too much. He doesn't exercise, very, walks a little he was saying. He doesn't take vitamins. And I was like, this is a crazy conversation. So you're advocating for this experimental mRNA vaccine technology and you don't even do anything else to improve your immune system?

Joe Rogan
Do you take care of your immune system in other ways? Do you take probiotics? Are you cautious about your diet?

Peter Hotez
I'm not as cautious about my diet as I should be, I'm a junk food-aholic, actually.

Joe Rogan
Well that seems like a terrible thing for your health.

Peter Hotez
That is a terrible thing for my health, and something my wife is working on it.

Joe Rogan
But that seems ridiculous for someone who works with health.

Peter Hotez
Yeah, Yeah.

Joe Rogan
What's going on with you, man?
Sometimes, man, I just don't get it right.

How often?

How often do I steal a bag of chips or something like that?

How often do you eat garbage?

No, no hopefully not every day, but maybe a couple of times a week.

Oh.

That's with Rachel, my daughter with autism. That's like our thing is to go to the, it's called The Burger Joint or to Shake Shack to get a cheeseburger, we'll sneak some fries so.

Like that mouth pleasure so much you're willing to sacrifice a little bit of health.

I am, yeah. I, you know, I, you know, I can, I have to concede that's the case.

Well, there's, I mean, I don't have to tell you, but there's a large body of data that connects poor diet to a host of diseases. That seems like a crazy decision for a guy in your line of work.

There you go. Sometimes the, sometimes the, it's not all brain. It's something else.

Virologist Peter Hotez tore into Rogan on Twitter for hosting Robert F. Kennedy Jr on his podcast.

Hotz shared a Vice article accusing him of spreading misinformation for hosting vaccine critic RFK Jr.

Nobody will debate me for 18 years, nobody will debate me. In fact, I've scheduled many, many debates, and I've asked Hotez many, many times to debate me. And I think you've asked him here, why don't you debate Robert Kennedy? And he said, because he's a cunning lawyer, or something like that. But I've debated Hotez on the telephone with kind of a referee. And his science is just made up. He cannot stand by it, he can't cite studies.

When Hotez publicly criticized quote, the misinformation, is when Rogan, in true Rogan form, hit back.

He invited him on to challenge RFK Jr. Three-hour open debate, no holds barred. Rogan even promised to give Hotez 100,000 to the charity of his choice.
Peter Hotez

The point is anti-vaccine disinformation, it's always done a lot of damage and harm, but now it's a lethal force in the United States, and that's why we have to have that discussion, and I offered to come and talk to, go on Joe Rogan again, I've been on a couple of times, and have that discussion with him, but not to turn it into the Jerry Springer Show with having RFK Jr on.

Various news reporters

Rogan's initial offer of $100,000 climbed to over $1.5 million. People who added hundreds of thousands of dollars to Rogan's initial offer include Pershing Square CEO Bill Ackman and philanthropist Steve Kirsch.

Various news reporters

Elon Musk it involved, him saying, quote, he knows he's wrong, he's scared. Obviously, he’s referring to Hotez.

Various news reporters

The pot continues to grow from influencers who are pledging funds. Now it's about 2.62 million.

Dan Cohen

I'm going to give it a 0% chance. There is no way Hotez will debate, he cannot handle it.

Del Bigtree

Alright, well, that bet is now up to $2.62 million. Tens of millions of people have been weighing in on this conversation. It's my honor and pleasure to be joined right now by Robert Kennedy Jr. Robert, looks like we've got you stuck in some diner somewhere in America right now. I want to thank you for taking the time to join us.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

Thank you. Yeah, I'm in Littleton, New Hampshire, about a speech at a group called Porcfest here. I'm really happy to talk to you Del.

Del Bigtree

It's good to have you here. So this is, you basically broke Twitter this week with this debate. First of all, I think the Rogan podcast was one of the first times you've had almost three hours to really lay out your perspective on vaccinations, which is very nuanced and powerful. Millions of people weighing in. Why is this such an important topic for you?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

Well, it's a topic that I've been, that I stumbled into. As you know, I got dragged kicking and screaming into this. It's not something I wanted to do, but I saw these just facts and science that were shocking to me. And, as you know, once you start, because the same thing happened to you, you torched your whole career because you saw things that you just could not ignore. And I think Hotez does not want to debate me because the only way that I am discredited is if I can be silenced outright, or what I've been saying has been, is mischaracterized as unreasonable, as crazy, or whatever, and that once people see me and they hear my arguments, they understand that these are just common sense arguments, I'm not trying to stop people from getting vaccinated. I've never been anti-vax, anti-vaccine, never. I've always said I'm not anti-vaccine for any vaccine that is shown to be safe and effective, but that we need actually to have robust science. We need regulators who are not financially entangled with the pharmaceutical industry that they're supposed to be regulating. And we don't have those things in this country right now, and so Hotez and others, he is the most visible leader of the pro-vaccine movement, of the vaccine-at-any-cost movement. And his premise is that industry, injuries from vaccines are so rare that nobody should pay attention to them, they're 1 in 1,000,000, which is his position. But the actual science, when CDC has paid for studies, the science shows the injury rates are 1 in 39. Many of these injuries are serious and some of them even kill people.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

So for each vaccine, 1 in 39, and this is CDC's own study, the Lazarus study, for example, but many, many others. You look at the Gardasil clinical trials, many others, say 1 in 37, 1 in 39, 2.6% of the people or 2.7 or 2.3, it's always around that area. So the question then becomes, what do we do with the people who are injured? Do we just ignore them and say they don't exist and de-platform them and gaslight them, which is what Hotez's policy has been? Let's instead talk about how we handle those injuries and whether those people should actually be compensated, and whether there should be a good surveillance system that actually works. They all say, Hotez says, well, the VAERS system doesn't work. The VAERS system is the only system they got. They've known it doesn't work for 40 years, and they've actually developed another system in 210 that would work. When they implemented that system in one HMO, the Harvard Pilgrim up in Boston, they found that the injury rates that were being reported were 1 in 37 or 1 in 39 kids, and so they said, we don't want this system, it's telling too much truth. And it was a machine counting, the system now is voluntary. Their own data show, from CDC's own study, 2010 study, Lazarus, shows that fewer than 1%, fewer than 1% of vaccine injuries are actually reported. So that means, less than 1 in 100. For every vaccine injury, there's more than 100 that are out there for every one reported. Of course, this is something that would be intolerable to anybody, and so they have to deny it. And that's why he won't debate.

Del Bigtree

So you don't think he'll ever show up for this debate, even though we're pushing $3 million to any nonprofit he wants to give it to? You don't think he'll show up.
[00:13:51] Robert F. Kennedy Jr
No, I do not think he will debate. I don't think that he can survive a debate. I don't think he can survive facts, the facts. And it's not, Del, that I'm a good debater. It's just that I do know the facts and I can cite the sources and I also know any sources that he's going to cite. I know, you know, I have domain knowledge of this because I've been studying and I'm litigating it for so long, and I think that he is the. Years ago, I had about a ten-hour discussion on telephone, by telephone, many, many phone calls over several months, with Hotez with a referee. And it was supposed to be a prelude to a public debate. But in the end, he said that he would like to debate, but that NIH was ordering him not to debate. I don't know if that's true or not. The weird thing was, he wasn't even working for NIH. NIH, maybe he meant Anthony Fauci or Francis Collins, I don't know. It's all speculation. I can only tell you what Peter Hotez told me. He said he was not going to debate me because NIH had ordered him not to do so.

[00:15:09] Del Bigtree
Are you open to debating anyone else in the scientific community if it's not Peter Hotez? Maybe he's shackled, but a Paul Offit or a Stanley Plotkin. Are you basically, I mean, what is your statement to the scientific community about a debate? Who are you open to debating on this?

[00:15:27] Robert F. Kennedy Jr
I'll debate anybody.

[00:15:29] Del Bigtree
Okay.

[00:15:29] Robert F. Kennedy Jr
I mean, you know, let me give you a proviso. If it's somebody totally unqualified to debate me, if it's somebody that the entire, the other side is going to dismiss as a palooka, you know, as somebody whom right. But if it's somebody who's in the arena where the other side puts credence in him, so that if he loses that debate, it actually is meaningful to everybody, then I'll debate them.

[00:16:02] Del Bigtree
Well, I just want to thank you. You have been obviously at the forefront of this. This, I think, is one of the biggest moments for this conversation, it's something that we've worked hard to make it public. This needs to be a conversation. This explosion on Twitter is the biggest thing we've ever seen. Your conversation with Joe Rogan was spectacular. And for those that watch this show, The HighWire, and really want someone that's not afraid to ask the hard questions, you were certainly persevering there. Where do we follow you on Twitter? I mean, is it, where is the best place to follow what you're doing and what happens with this debate in the future?

[00:16:38] Robert F. Kennedy Jr
It's Robert F. Kennedy Jr on Twitter, I'm on Instagram, I'm on TikTok now. They put me back on TikTok, they put me back on Instagram, I was platform for years on those. You probably can't find much on YouTube because as soon as somebody puts it up, they take, Youtube takes it down, it's a censorship machine. But anyway, I'm really, really happy for everything that you do, Del, thank you.

[00:17:05] Del Bigtree
Well, we're in this together and there's a lot of people behind you now in this work, so it's really important. I want to thank you for taking the time. I know you're on the run, so we're going to let you go. Safe travels and I'll see you somewhere out there real soon.

[00:17:20] Robert F. Kennedy Jr
Thank you, Del. I'll see you soon, my friend.

[00:17:22] Del Bigtree
Take care. You know, it's really interesting when he says that Peter Hotez said that the NIH was stopping him from having that debate. I think one of the most important statements, when we think about this conversation, why won't they have the conversation? Clearly, there is no one in science or medicine that can say that vaccines don't hurt anybody, don't kill anybody. That would fly in the face of all that we know to be true about any pharmaceutical product on the world. I've even gone as far as to say if you had a stadium full of people, you would be hard-pressed to find a piece of food that you could force everyone to take in that stadium that someone wouldn't have an anaphylactic reaction and potentially die. That's just the way it is. And so I think Robert Kennedy is right. Their concern is that you're going to have to admit some people are being injured, some children being killed, by this vaccine program, and no matter how small that is, are we not here to take care of them, too? Is there not some way to create alternatives for them? Is there not some way to test and see what those vulnerabilities are, have a better sense of what's going on here, so that everybody in America is safe? I think that that's the most important thing. And the former head of the NIH, when we speak about the NIH, Dr. Bernadine Healy, so one of the leading scientists in the world, she looked into vaccines. She was asked in a CBS interview, this is many years ago, but why is it that she, what she found when she was looking at the vaccine program, I think this says it all. This is why they won't debate. Take a look at this.
Bernadine Healy, MD

This is the time when we do have the opportunity to understand whether or not there are susceptible children, perhaps genetically, perhaps they have a metabolic issue, mitochondrial disorder, immunological issue, that makes them more susceptible to vaccines, plural, or to one particular vaccine, or to a component of vaccine like mercury. The fact that there is concern that you don't want to know that susceptible group is a real disappointment to me. If you know that susceptible group, you can save those children. The reason why they didn't want to look for those susceptibility groups was because they're afraid that if they found them, however big or small they were, that would scare the public away.

[00:19:48] Bernadine Healy, MD

So when I first heard about it, I thought, well, that doesn't make sense to me. The more you delve into it, if you look at the basic science, if you look at the research that's been done in animals, if you also look at some of these individual cases, and if you look at the evidence that there is no link, what I come away with is the question has not been answered.

Del Bigtree

I think it's really important for everyone to wrap their head around what she said there, because I think it's true. It's human nature and it makes some sense. Our medical establishment will refuse to do proper studies, demographic studies, or even retrospective studies using databases like the VSD at the CDC that has over 10 million people in it. There have been studies of that database saying you absolutely can do a vaccinated versus unvaccinated study, a comparative study, to see if there's a difference in health outcomes, and maybe start triangulating the issues. But what she's telling you is, the reason they refuse to do those studies is that they are petrified that if they ever do a study even asking the question, and they find out that there's even a small group of people that are actually being injured and killed by vaccines, which is a no-brainer, you know that the case. Penicillin's not good for everybody. We have alternatives for people who have allergic reactions to penicillin. That is true about every drug. Every cancer drug has an alternative that you can find if the one you're using is killing you. This is true about vaccines, too, but the vaccine program is the only product forced upon you by a mandate, the only one being forced if you want to go to school.

[00:22:33] Jefferey Jaxen

Alright, Del, Well, we know now that the FDA has denied a citizen's petition to update the COVID label with evidence of the adverse reactions that there is a basis, a scientific basis, to really put on there. So this idea, like Kennedy was saying, and like you were saying, of the see no evil, hear no evil posture by the US health agencies, it has carried over into Big Tech's censorship algorithms, into kind of this like 21st century digital algorithmic censorship complex that we're living in. And recently, Mark Zuckerberg, he's the the leader of Meta, was once Facebook, he had a candid moment on an interview recently where he talked about, you know, he was the hammer of censorship, his organization, with Instagram as well. And he had his candid moment where he's starting to talk about, well, maybe we did the wrong thing. Take a listen.

Del Bigtree

Alright.

Mark Zuckerberg

I do you think that you get to a set of harms where there is more social debate around it. So misinformation, I think, is, has been a really tricky one because there are things that are kind of obviously false, right, that are maybe factual. But may not be harmful. Since like alright, are you going to censor someone for just being wrong? If there's no kind of harm implication of what they're doing, I think that that's, there's a bunch of real kind of issues and challenges there. But then I think that there are other places where it is, it just takes some of the stuff around COVID earlier on in the pandemic where there were real health implications, but there hadn't been time to fully vet a bunch of the scientific assumptions, and, you know, unfortunately, I think a lot of the kind of establishment on that kind of waffled on a bunch of facts and asked for a bunch of things to be censored that in retrospect ended up being more debatable or true. And that stuff is really tough, right, and really undermines trust.

Jefferey Jaxen

So, yeah there he says, waffled on facts. And he was kind of waffling as well, saying like, well, we kind of just censored it and maybe it turned out to be true. They were censoring people's actual stories about adverse reactions after a vaccine. They were talking about the harms of lockdowns, masking. Remember, we couldn't even ask about the origins of the virus if it came from a lab or if it was natural. If you ended up on one side of that equation, you were censored from the very beginning.
[00:25:04] Del Bigtree
Yeah we lost, look, we lost our Facebook channel, that happened. And it's incredible to hear him say, erring on the side of caution, we went with a shoot first, destroy the Cons, you know, the First Amendment of the United States of America, and then ask questions later. And as it turns out, we made some mistakes, sorry about that. Sorry about the destruction of your civil rights here in America.

[00:25:23] Jefferey Jaxen
And one of the leading health care professionals leading that charge was outgoing Director, now, of the CDC, Rochelle Walensky. She appeared and testified before the select Committee on the Coronavirus pandemic recently, where she was questioned by Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene. Take a look how that went.

[00:25:41] Del Bigtree
Alright.

[00:25:41] Marjorie Taylor Greene
We heard you say today that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. But what I'd like to talk to you today about is the 1.5 million VAERS reports that also reported 35,000 deaths associated with the COVID-19 vaccine. And this has been what many Americans feel like a largely ignored issue. They feel like the CDC has completely ignored the reports. They feel like you, as the CDC Director, have completely ignored their reports, and I'd like to talk about that a little bit. In 2020, it was late 2020 when Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine was approved, and there were, COVID-19 vaccines were the second-highest reported, that was over 10,000. But in 2021, when vaccines were mandated, it was a federal mandate in September 9th of 2021. Federal employees and contractors were required. 90% of the 3.5 million people employed or contracted under the federal government got at least one dose of the vaccine. Vaccine cards were widely required in Democrat-run cities all over the country, basically to become a member of society. And in 2021, COVID-19 reports skyrocketed to number one at 728,829 reports. Second was the zoster shingles vaccine at just over 14,000. That's a massive number.

[00:27:17] Rochelle Walensky
I will, do want to talk a minute about the Vaccine Adverse Reporting, the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System. So that system is intended for any person who has gotten a vaccine, if they have an untoward event after that vaccine, whether or not is related to the vaccine, they report. It is intended to have an over-reporting. All of the vaccine - not all. Most of the vaccines that were being given, remember, we gave 676 million doses of the vaccine. Any adverse event, if you got hit by a truck after you got your vaccine, that was reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.

[00:27:53] Del Bigtree
I mean, it's incredible to watch this statement about car accidents, they bring this up. And I'd like to know what percentage actually somehow blamed the car accident. We've done a lot of investigation. It's really hard to fill out a VAERS report. Most doctors, when they're asked, can't take the time. The screen closes out on you, you have to start all over. But mostly what Robert Kennedy Jr said is true. Why after 40 years is this the only real capture system we have, especially when you release an experimental product knowing we're going to need a robust system if we're going to catch any problems with the vaccine. So it's absolutely deplorable that you just say, well, you can't even trust it. Well build a better one then. And I also want to put this out there, for anyone that's like, yeah, it's ridiculous, car accidents. Okay. What was one of the big problems they had with the vaccine? Why did they start making people getting the COVID vaccine stay in the office for 45 minutes? Because they were passing out cold. What happens if you're leaving your doctor's office and you pass out cold while driving? Just going to put it out there, so that you don't think it's just absolutely preposterous that someone put a car accident in here. I'm not sure how many there are, but I'm just saying, there are reasons why a car accident could be in there, syncope being when you pass out, which is a side effect that could actually cause some problems if it happened while you were driving.

[00:29:07] Jefferey Jaxen
And this VAERS system's been a massive point of contention, because, like you said, it's the only system, but also its ability to report. So this is a very rare moment because we never get a person at the CDC talking about this system, let alone a Director. So Walensky says, it's going to have to have over-reporting, so have no fear. So let's really just fact check that claim really quick. So in 2000, there was a report by the Committee of Government Reform, and this looked at the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, which VAERS is under, and it was called "Addressing needs and improving practices." And it says this in that report. "While the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) may be lauded as the 'front line' of vaccine safety, the lack of enforcement provisions and effective monitoring of reporting practices preclude accurate assessments of the extent to which adverse events are actually reported. Former FDA Commissioner David A. Kessler has estimated that VAERS reports currently represent only a fraction of the serious adverse events." And then we go on to what Kennedy was saying, the Harvard Pilgrim study that ended in 2009, and that's where CDC gave almost $1 million to this large health care network and said, automate it, take the human factor out of it, and automate it for 30 days, tell me what you find. 715,000 people in this study, I guess you want to call it.
[00:30:26] Jefferey Jaxen
And this is what they found, they write this, quote, "Adverse events from drugs and vaccines are common, but underreported...fewer than 1% of vaccine adverse events are reported." And so. People can say, well, that was decades ago, the system has improved, we really had it online for COVID. Not so fast. What was one of the first, besides the fainting and anaphylactic shocks to the COVID vaccine, one of the first major issues to pop up was myocarditis from mRNA vaccines in young boys. And so what did they find? The Journal of the American Medical Association looked at that from the vaccine rollout in December 2020 to August in 2021, they used the VAERS system. The researchers used the VAERS system to base this study on, and what did they find? They said, well, as we're using this system, we found this. "...as a passive system, VAERS data are subject to reporting biases in that both underreporting and overreporting are possible. Given the high verification rates of reports of myocarditis to VAERS after mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccination, underreporting is more likely. Therefore, the actual rates of myocarditis per million doses of vaccines are likely higher than estimated." So even the researchers are saying, look, we're using this thing, but it's underreporting. And since then, obviously, that was in 2022, we're getting reports of myocarditis is a lot more than even found in that study.

[00:31:46] Del Bigtree
For people that want to see where VAERS is at right now when it comes to the COVID vaccine, here's their most recent numbers from OpenVAERS. 35,398 deaths that are reported. Remember, we usually see about 400 deaths per year from the vaccine program, which I think is extremely high. I will also say that none of these have been fully verified, so these are just reports, not necessarily the numbers, but as we're saying, this could be somewhere between 1 to 10% of the actual amount of numbers. 203,000 hospitalizations, 151,000 urgent care, 236,000 doctor visits, Bell's palsy, all the rest. And by the way, go to our website and check out the V-safe data, which is very accurate because it monitored people, and you'll see serious adverse events at rates that are just astronomical. This is one of the things that we focus a lot on, and rightfully so.

[00:32:41] Jefferey Jaxen
And so the pandemic has wound down, and you see people that were once leading a charge. Fauci's out, Francis Collins is gone. And now Walensky is on her way out as well, and people are looking at the CDC, because this is an agency that admitted mistakes, during the pandemic. Admitted that they were going to do an internal review of the agency, they were going to do a sweeping reorganization. And even the public is saying that they don't trust them. Look at this, this is just from two months ago, this is a survey. "A quarter of Americans distrust CDC recommendations, survey finds." If you go into that article, you read about the survey, a total of 63% total are questioning the trust of the agency in one way or another. So what are we going to do? Are we going to put in somebody that is a free-thinking, really.....

[00:33:24] Del Bigtree
Critical thinking. How about the word, critical thinking medicalprofessional.

[00:33:29] Jefferey Jaxen
Right. Someone who's not just going to take the football, the handout of a talking point, not question it, and run out to the public with it over the media. So we have now a new CDC director that Biden has chosen. Her name is Mandy Cohen. "Biden picks Mandy Cohen, the architect of NC's COVID-19 response, as CDC director." And you hear that, you hear architect, well, this must be something very important she did there in North Carolina. And so this is, let's take a little background of her. So any public health official, especially someone going into that high position, should be judged by how they handled themselves during the pandemic. This is one of the most defining moments in public health history of the century. And so what is their report card on this? So let's look at Mandy Cohen in June of 2021. So remember now, emails, FOIA emails have just come out showing that Rochelle Walensky was discussing vaccine breakthrough infections as early as January 30th, 2021. So fast forward to June of 2021. We know there's breakthrough infections. We know you can transmit this virus if you get the vaccine. Let's listen to what Mandy Cohen does and says in the public.

[00:34:42] Del Bigtree
Okay.

[00:34:43] Mandy Cohen
What we heard from the CDC last week was even better news than we had heard before, right? We had heard that vaccines protect you from getting COVID. I think the new piece of information for us was now we really have more definitive data to show that it also prevents you from giving COVID to others. And that's really when the masks come in, right. Is the mask were about protecting you from giving to others even if you don't know you have it. And the fact that the CDC was so confident to say, now we know that these vaccines not only protect you as an individual, it protects you from giving it to others. I think that's why we were able to move forward more quickly.

[00:35:22] Del Bigtree
I love that all these people are on camera saying this over and over again, and what a disastrous failure of judgment that has ended up being.

[00:35:31] Jefferey Jaxen
And anybody, including us, which we did, can look at the trials, Pfizer trials, they weren't even tested to see if they stopped transmission. And so they say, the CDC data, now we know that she was wrong. Cleveland Clinic's study recently has shown that this is it, over 51,000 employees looking at the effectiveness of the bivalent vaccine, and they concluded this. "The risk of COVID-19 increased with time since the most recent prior COVID-19 episode and with the number of vaccine doses previously received." So we're talking negative efficacy, essentially there.
[00:36:02] Del Bigtree
The more vaccines you get, the more at risk you are for being infected, hardly what we think of when we think of the definition of a vaccine.

[00:36:10] Jefferey Jaxen
And so let's talk about schools, school closures, masking. How did she do on those? Because those are obviously huge, huge points of contention again here, during that COVID pandemic response. In September of 2021, the Union County School Board, that's in North North Carolina, voted 8 to 1 to immediately end staff responsibility for contact tracing, quarantine operations for asymptomatic students and staff. What did Mandy Cohen do? Here's the headline from that time. She sent them a "Legal action may be required to protect the public's health." States pens letter to Union County Public Schools to follow COVID-19 toolkit." That was Mandy Cohen signing her name on that letter. She basically threatened legal action, and what they did was they actually backed down, the school, reversed that 8 to 1 vote and said, sorry, we don't want a legal battle with our state health department, so we had to stop that. Now, let's look at...

[00:37:03] Del Bigtree
So bullying schools that were just trying to get their kids an education. Unbelievable.

[00:37:08] Jefferey Jaxen
It appears so. And so, as we sit here, we're still waiting to hear about all of those benefits of masking kindergartners and kids during the pandemic for extended periods of time. We know the harms, the harms are showing up with their development. But how did North Carolina handle this? Well, here's the headline from that time. "NC recommends districts require masks for all students and teachers in K-8 schools, unvaccinated HS students and teachers" as well. And you start to go into this article and you read, "The guidance cuts off at 8th grade because there's a mix of children who are eligible in middle school, Cohen says. She's hoping the incentive to take off masks will encourage high schoolers to get vaccinated." So it's not science, it's an incentive, and it goes on to say this. "Cohen says schools may still require universal masking at the high school, for example if they think their current vaccination rate is too low." So here's your health department head, giving the hat tip to high schools saying, you know what, if you're not happy with your vaccination rate, mask those kids up until they comply, because that is what I'm telling you to do. And so we have some more video of Cohen, she was recently at kind of a Q&A session in North Carolina on a college campus, and she was really candid about some of the ways that the COVID restrictions were being thought about, were being talked about behind closed doors. Kind of gives you a window more of who she is. Take a look.

[00:38:33] Mandy Cohen
Probably the person I called the most was the Secretary of Health and Human Services in Massachusetts. She worked for a Republican governor, just to. But when she was like, are you going to let them have professional football? And I was like, nope. And she's like, okay, neither are we, neither are we. So, you know, it was like conversations like that. So, or I'd be like, so when are you going to think about lightening up on masks? So you're like, next Monday? I'm like, okay, next Monday.

[00:39:03] Del Bigtree
Because it's science. Wow. Amazing.

[00:39:09] Jefferey Jaxen
Yeah. And so, looking at all this, I think the public has watched the flip-flop of Fauci, of Walensky, all of these years. And we're hoping, alright, at least we're not going to have somebody that is cut from the same cloth as Fauci, this double-talking bureaucrat that's been in office forever. And unfortunately, then I start looking on the Internet, and I see a picture that looks like this. And this is Mandy Cohen with a Fauci face mask.

[00:39:40] Del Bigtree
Oh no. Aaaugh.

[00:39:43] Jefferey Jaxen
And so, there you have it. I guess we're going to be reporting, though, at every step of the way because she has some big shoes to fill, and there's a lot of people watching how the CDC is going to gain back the trust of Americans. And we've had media like never before looking at this agency, so we'll see how they bake cookies in public this time.

[00:40:03] Del Bigtree
Well, maybe if she just sticks to calling friends and rolling dice to make decisions for the CDC, you know, we'll sort of bring that trust right back to where it used to be. Jefferey, great reporting, amazing stuff. Just such an honor to be working with you, so I'll see you next week.

[00:40:20] Jefferey Jaxen
Thank you, Del.
[00:40:21] Del Bigtree
Alright, if you like what Jefferey is doing, you should definitely check him out on The Jaxen Report, which is a part of the constant newspaper that we're putting out. We also have The Informant, which is a gift to all of you that are donating to make this show possible, to make our legal work possible. The Informant is our gift to you, brand new, I want to say episode, but a new Informant has just come out, so you should definitely check --volume, that's the word-- check that out. And I want to thank all of you that make this show possible. Through your donations, we are able to not be controlled by our sponsors so we can ask any question we want. We can have whatever debate we want, and there's nothing anyone can do about it. You make that possible. As you watch this show, I want you to ask yourself, especially those of you who have been here from the beginning, wow, how did The HighWire get so much of it right. Well, it's because we have an international body of scientists that have been weighing in from the beginning and giving us actual science and evidence. We don't call friends and roll dice to figure out what's going on, we actually look to the sources, we read our science.

[00:41:27] Del Bigtree
To make that possible, to keep this team together, we need your help, so please become a recurring donor. Just go to thehighwire.com, up there on the top of the screen, hit Donate to ICAN. We're asking for a recurring donation, so whether it's $1 or $5 or $23 a month for 2023, you make it possible for us to be free to report whatever we damn well please, and we try to report what we think you care about. Speaking of caring about, so many of us watched this incredible experience happen before our eyes. We lost our jobs, our children were kept home, many of them getting depressed, we saw our economy destroyed, all by a White House and a set of decisions by a task force that seemed, especially if you were watching The HighWire, to be going against the science of what we actually saw happening around the world. At the center of it, there was a moment where there was a bright, shining light, at least from our perspective, that stepped in there. His name was Dr. Scott Atlas. He has been called a hero, he has been called a villain. And when you watch him in the news, this is what that has looked like.

[00:42:37] Various news reporters
Dr. Scott Atlas, President Trump's special adviser on the pandemic.

[00:42:41] Donald Trump
Scott is a very famous man, who's also very highly respected.

[00:42:46] Various news reporters
Chief resident at Northwestern, fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania, expert in Neuroradiology.

[00:42:52] Donald Trump
We have a man with us who's a great expert from Stanford. He's working with us, he's consulting with us. Dr. Scott Atlas.

[00:42:59] Dr. Scott Atlas
Okay, thank you, Mr. President, it's a great honor to be asked to help out in any way I can. I'm a healthcare policy person, and I have a background in medical science. My role really is to translate medical science into public policy. Herd immunity, or population immunity, exists when enough people in a population get an infection, have their own established immunity, and break the chains of connectivity of contagiousness to people, particularly the vulnerable. That's just a known fact. That's an immunological concept. We know that the risk of the disease is extremely low for children, even less than that of seasonal flu. We know that the harms of locking out the children from school are enormous. And we also know that educating America's children is right at the top of the list for our nation's priorities. In the cities, in the states, in the countries that had a mask mandate, the cases exploded. And when you compare, which I think is really striking, what happened in this fall surge, fall/winter, between Florida and California, because they're distinctly opposite in how the governors handled things, Florida did better than California. This kind of isolation is one of the unspoken tragedies of the elderly, who are now being told, don't see your family at Thanksgiving. For many people, this is their final Thanksgiving, believe it or not. What are we doing here?

[00:44:27] Various news reporters
Dr. Atlas, okay. A guy with no pandemic experience.

[00:44:33] Various news reporters
Dr. Scott Atlas, whose public stance on the pandemic echoes Trump's unscientific claims.

[00:44:39] Dr. Scott Atlas
If you don't believe that herd immunity exists as a pathway to block, as a way to block the pathways to the vulnerable in an infection, then you would never really advocate or believe in giving widespread vaccination. That's the whole point of it.

[00:44:55] Various news reporters
The man who has no background in infectious disease.

[00:44:58] Various news reporters
Is a radiologist.

[00:44:59] Various news reporters
Alrighty.

[00:45:00] Various news reporters
It's like getting a podiatrist to work on your spine.
Various news reporters
Dr. Atlas repeatedly questioned the efficacy of face masks. He talked about the potential benefits of herd immunity. He also wondered whether all children essentially should go back to school without changing guidelines.

Dr. Scott Atlas
It is incontrovertible that there is extremely low risk to children from this illness. Not only low risk, but lower risk than seasonal influenza for both hospitalization and death.

Various news reporters
Americans hear one thing from the CDC director and another thing from you. Who are we to believe?

Dr. Scott Atlas
You're supposed to believe the science, and I'm telling you the science.

Dr. Scott Atlas
I'm telling you the science, and that's the answer. And if you want to look up all the data, you're free to. This is the most irrational public policy probably in modern history. You don't lock down the children because you are personally afraid. That's totally outrageous.

Dr. Scott Atlas
Dr. Scott Atlas, President Trump's special adviser on the pandemic, has resigned his post.

Dr. Scott Atlas
I don't just blindly accept CDC data. They've been erratic in what they've said.

Various news reporters
He was serving a 130-day detail which was set to expire this week, that's why he submitted his resignation yesterday. In a letter to the President, he defended his views.

Dr. Scott Atlas
I actually thought that truth mattered, that facts mattered, and my role was to provide the best possible advice in a big crisis. If you don't know this stuff, you shouldn't be in the CDC. If you don't know this stuff, you should not be advising the President of the United States. And if you don't know this stuff, you certainly should not be on TV talking to the American public.

Dr. Scott Atlas
It is absolutely my honor and pleasure to be joined by Dr. Scott Atlas. Thank you so much.

Dr. Scott Atlas
Thank you for having me.

Del Bigtree
So your book, "A Plague Upon Our House," it's obviously worn out, I've read it several times. I have like a million things I would love to talk to you about, we will never get to all of it, but all I can say is this truly is a bucket list moment for me. We have, I have been so curious about what happened inside the White House. We were watching it from the outside. But to begin with, when the pandemic hit, what first inspired you to sort of start investigating it and starting to write articles about it?

Dr. Scott Atlas
Sure. So I was working, as I have been doing for over a decade, in healthcare policy, which basically combines my medical science background of 25 years with how we should have our healthcare system, to increase access and quality. And I was working on a book that, because I thought, frankly, that the 2020 year would be an issue of importance, healthcare system reform. So I was writing this book and the data, the numbers, the the studies about the Princess Diamond ship of Japan and the fear and the World Health Organization information on this infection fatality rate that was stratospheric came out. And so I was saying, well, what's going on here, because it's obvious who's at risk. And the infection fatality rate was being calculated incorrectly because they weren't considering in the denominator of that fraction everyone who would be infected, because most people, a large percentage anyway, with a respiratory infection, are asymptomatic. So this number was calculated on the basis of who was really sick enough to go see a doctor. So I'm home and I start explaining this to my own son. And my kids are, I have two sons and they're both smarter than I am, and that's good.

Del Bigtree
That'd be amazing.

Dr. Scott Atlas
Doesn't mean they know more, but they're smarter. But...

Del Bigtree
I'm one of those.
Dr. Scott Atlas

So I'm explaining this to my sons, and they don't understand what I'm talking about. And I'm saying to myself, wait a second, this is obvious stuff. This is not complicated. You don't lock down low-risk people and not protect the high-risk people, and watch the high-risk people, the elderly in the nursing homes particularly, die. This was a failed strategy. And yet people were frantic, because of the media, because of the WHO, because of a lot of reasons. And so I said, okay, if you don't understand this, then I need to get working on researching it and explaining it. And so I dropped everything about my book and I started working on specifically researching the pandemic, and, you know, going through all the data, going through the articles, speaking to epidemiologists every day, every other day, and became visible in the news because it became very obvious in March of 2020, when I wrote a piece saying, end the lockdowns, this is the wrong strategy, and increase the protection of the people who are high-risk, meaning the elderly, and I called it targeted protection.

Del Bigtree

Here is the article in the Hill, "The data is in -- stop the panic and end the total isolation." In fact, you had several articles out in the Hill. "The COVID-19 shutdown will cost American millions of years of life." "Science says: Open the schools." "Fear first education last?!" All of these things we were reporting on, actually, and you popped up. In fact, one point, we were doing a show and celebrating that there were several voices that were not being heard, just to give you a sense of sort of how we've been tracking you. Take a look at this.

David L. Katz

The global data showed at the very beginning, and appeared to show to this day, that 98 to 99% of all cases are mild.

John Ioannidis

While lockdowns were justified initially, their perpetuation may risk many lives.

Dr. Scott Atlas

Treating COVID-19 at all costs is severely restricting other medical care and instilling fear in the public, creating a massive health disaster in addition to the severe economic harms that would generate a world poverty crisis with incalculable consequences.

Del Bigtree

That was May. We were talking about what you were writing, and I want to give you this opportunity, because I think it's one of the issues the media, and we'll talk about this, really defined who you are, but what is your background? I mean, some will say, oh, he's a radiologist, what does he have to do in this space? When you say, you know, you're a health specialist in sort of populations and health, what do you mean by that? Like, what's your background?

Dr. Scott Atlas

My background is, I'm an MD. I was educated at University of Chicago School of Medicine. I did a, I was all academic medicine for the first 25 years of my career, which means that I did my training at Northwestern and then at University of Pennsylvania. I was an assistant professor at University of Pennsylvania. I ended up working for most of my career there, and then I came to Stanford. And for those 25 years, I worked as a professor and a researcher and teaching other doctors and a clinician doing medical procedures, et cetera, in neurologic disorders of the brain and spine. I wrote the main book, most people would say, in magnetic resonance imaging, MRI of the Brain and Spine.

Del Bigtree

So when we're getting MRIs, our doctors that are doing that are well aware of the work that you've done because that's a huge part of your background.

Dr. Scott Atlas

Yes. I mean, the book is considered one of the books in MRI, if not the main book. And then, over the course of my academic career, I have over 100 scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals, I've been funded over 30 different grants. I've been given visiting professor lectures over 600 times at every major medical school in the country. And when I came to Stanford in 1998, I started to work also on health policy. And so I had sort of two positions, I was the Professor in Chief of Neuroradiology in the Stanford University Medical School, and I worked simultaneously on health policy, which was integrating information and knowledge about medical science with economics and access and quality of healthcare, medical care delivery, because most people that are in health policy don't really understand medicine. They understand economics of healthcare, but that's it. And so then in 2012, which is maybe more information than they asked for, but I was offered an endowed chair at Hoover Institution, which is a public policy institute as part of Stanford University. And I resigned from the medical school in 2012 because I don't like to dabble in things. I don't think it's, I think it's hard enough to do one thing very, very well, expert level, and so I quit the medical school and went over to work on health policy in 2012.
Dr. Scott Atlas

So for over a decade, I'm working on health policy. And what this crisis of COVID, the pandemic, required was health policy. That's my lane. It's not a surprise that most of the Stanford University medical school professors don't know the data, didn't understand what to do with this pandemic. Because the job of a health policy person is to integrate all the information and figure out how to address all public health, not just focus on stopping a single infection. So the breadth of knowledge of a health policy person is far broader than someone who's, say, a virologist or an epidemiologist. Those are parts of the puzzle, but the puzzle is very complicated. I'll just give you a very crude example. You could line up everybody on a wall and shoot them and you'll stop COVID. You're not going to do that because you're going to kill them. And, you know, this kind of uni-focal, really irrational focus on stopping all cases of COVID at all costs was known from the beginning to be completely harmful and wrong. And one of the articles you noted there that I wrote in May of 2020 was with some economists because it's one of the known parts of the whole health area that if you have a severe economic downturn, you kill people. Particularly, by the way, the low income and poor families.

Del Bigtree

Right. And so what's amazing, too, is, though you were sort of dragged through the media on these issues, you're even a unicorn inside of health policy, as you said. You're not just an economist and you're not just a bureaucrat. You've been a practicing doctor, diagnosis is the center of your specialty, your first 20-something years, and so you brought all that together. To me, you were like the most perfectly qualified person to be stepping into this space. So how did that happen? How did the White House, how did you, did you reach out to them? How did you make contact?

Dr. Scott Atlas

Sure. So I started to become visible because I wrote in this one, from March, that we should use targeted protection, with John Ioannidis also wrote it, and David Katz, formerly at Yale. We all sort of, almost at the same time, but independently wrote in March of 2020 that we need to end the lockdowns and use targeted protection. And then over the summer I started to do more of the work and was on tv somewhat, and, it's sort of a funny story, it turned out my my mother-in-law was watching the press conferences of the White House over the spring and summer of 2020, and she's in her 90s, and she called me up once and said, well, Scott, Kayleigh McEnany, the press secretary, is quoting your data and your statements. And I didn't know that, and she said, yeah, you're going to the White House, my mother-in-law said. And so I said, well, I'm not going to the White House. I don't want to go to the White House, no. And then I get a call actually a couple of weeks later, in July, from the White House Office of Personnel saying, would I come speak to President Trump? And of course, okay, people are dying.

Dr. Scott Atlas

This is the President of the United States. It's obvious the answer is yes. It has nothing to do with politics either way. I mean, there'd be something wrong with you, frankly, if you wouldn't go and speak to the President of your country. And so I did, and I say it that way because there are people who don't, believe it or not. And so I go in and spend a day at the White House having meetings, individual meetings with everybody from, you know, Vice President Pence, Kayleigh McEnany, the President, Jared Kushner, et cetera. And went through a series of meetings, and they were asking me about the pandemic and what I thought about this and what I thought about that. Many of them were taking notes. And at the end of the day, Jared Kushner said to me, well, we'd like you to help advise the President. And I said, okay, but this is what you're going to get. Because, frankly, I've always been very direct and outspoken, and so I wanted to make sure they understood what this was. I'm not a political person. And so I said, this is what you're going to get.

Dr. Scott Atlas

I'm going to say the truth of what I see, no matter who tells me not to. I'm not going to agree with someone just because somebody else tells me to, including the President of the United States, I'm not signing on to a group statement that I don't agree with. And Jared Kushner said, well, that's exactly why we want you. And I remember being struck and very happy to hear that. But the problem was the next sentence he said, he's, I'm concerned, though, they're going to destroy you once it becomes public. And, you know, that shocked me because, first of all, I didn't think Jared Kushner would care about that. But it shocked me more because I'm not really interested in being destroyed. I'm not insane. And so I said, well, why don't I go back to California and try it from there? And so he said, okay, let's do that. And so I went back to California for a few days, it became obvious, this was not going to work. Because it was a very sort of chaotic situation. People were feeding the President of the United States the wrong, grossly wrong, information, and the public was extremely fearful, and so I went back to Washington.

Del Bigtree

I remember the moment you did, we actually celebrated on the show. Just one one last time to show you how much we were following you, we actually changed the opening of our show. This is a flashback to the moment that you were invited into the White House. Take a look at this, everybody, it's kind of fun.

Intro music

(music) bom. bom. bom.
Ah. Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. Wherever you are out there in the world, it's time to step out onto The HighWire. Well, what does all this have to do with Atlas? Well, you know, when I watch the comments in the show, a lot of times I'll see it written in the comments, oh, from your lips to God's ears, Del. Well, this week, perhaps the next best thing. It went from our lips to President Trump's ears. As you know, here on The HighWire, we have been showing you that really the majority of scientists, virologists, doctors around the world disagree with the draconian measures of lockdowns, masks. They disagree that waiting for a vaccine is the way to go, many of them talking about herd immunity. Well, finally, finally, it's now in the middle of August, we are seeing some moves in the White House, and one of those guys that I was talking about, that's right, you got it. Dr. Scott Atlas was announced by Donald Trump as a part of the new task force.

We were pretty excited, obviously, about that announcement. And we had been following the work that you were doing. We were very much looking at the science. At that point, by August, it was clear, it was so crystal clear, even starting in China, then watching Italy, of course you had the cruise ship, and John Ioannidis was doing these great breakdowns. I think at that point, he was guessing that the overall death rate was somewhere in the 0.025 to 0.035% for everybody, clearly a much higher risk rate amongst the elderly, kids, 0.000 something. And so you were making a lot of sense. What is going on here? What is with the terror? This looks to be, really, for most people, a flu, a very bad flu for a very small group of people. So going to the White House, what was it you imagined you could do?

Well, this was sort of a tricky situation, obviously, because I'm not, I was sort of naive about the political welcome that I would get. And I say that in quotes, but I was not naive that there would be complete resistance to what I was saying. And so, I was asked to be an adviser to the president, but then at the same time I was told, but it's important I'm part of the task force, too. And I frankly said I don't want to be part of the task force, there's no point. These people are dug in. Birx had been running the task force since end of February. Fauci and Birx were the most important parts of the task force, and they were there for five, six months already. There was no point in me saying, oh, I'm going to try to change their minds, but it was of course important that I hear what they were saying and do my best. So I went into the task force meetings. The first one was in second week of August, really. I had been advising the President, frankly, about a couple of things before that, which was during, when I got there July 30th, 2020, which was number one. It's very important that he resumes his press conferences and talks to the people and says the data. Okay, even that alone, the public, if you remember, was in a tremendous amount of fear. Fear is debilitating. Fear makes people think irrationally. If you're a leader, you're most important thing is to say the facts and allay any unnecessary fear.

Right. Don't scream fire in a crowded room.

Absolutely.

Let's try to put some fires out and get some peace and sanity going on.

And I thought that the most important way to eliminate fear is to eliminate the unknown as much as possible, which was to say the data. So I was trying to help give some data to the President in his prepared remarks. And then I was sitting in on the task force and the task force, it was as bad, really worse than I imagined. And in a way worse because the amount of, you know, there's two parts of the task force, basically the logistical side, which was very good actually. But the medical side of the task force was run by Dr. Deborah Birx. Deborah Birx was the task force coordinator. She wrote all of the White House official policy to every governor. She visited every state, with or without Vice President Pence. She was the head of the medical advice. Fauci, Dr. Fauci, was not in charge of anything, but he was the most visible voice of the task force.

Yeah, he was the one we were following, thinking was driving policy, because you heard a lot more from him. You always just sort of saw her in the background with a new scarf but didn't get this sense she was driving anything.

Right. She was literally the person who was writing the policies. And that, the White House task force was the federal policy. So Fauci was on TV, in the media, influencing the public. And then the third doctor of importance was Dr. Redfield, the head of the CDC. And so among the people of the, when I went to a task force meeting, there were about eight of us at this table, with Vice President Pence, who was the official head of the task force. But President Trump had nothing to do with the task force. President Trump did not visit the task force meetings. President Trump, in fact, was saying something very different from the message of the task force, and this was part of the problematic leadership under that administration because they had two separate messages going to the public. President Trump was saying, before I got there, that the school should be open, that businesses should be open, that we're killing people with the lockdowns. But the task force, and that is the official policy, was telling the public, but also all the governors, all the local health officials, lock down, close schools, mask up, et cetera, et cetera.
[01:06:57] Del Bigtree
Let's talk about some of the personalities inside of the White House. One of them that you've mentioned, Deborah Birx, like that she's in charge. In the book, you talk about that at first it sounds like they're trying to shuffle you around and not really get around her, as though everyone's like, I don't know how this is going to work out. Seemed to be a paranoia. And then the moment you meet her, I think we have the excerpt from the book, let me just read this. "After an initial - and quick - meeting with Dr. Birx, I saw that Kushner's concerns were fully warranted. She seemed threatened right away by my presence. She was noticeably uneasy, even though I told her, 'I'm just here to help in any way I can.' She instantly asked, with slight hesitancy in her voice, 'How long will you be there?' I said it wasn't clear, which was certainly true. My White House badge, a sign of some permanence, was tucked inside my laptop case." She wasn't happy to see you.

[01:07:49] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, my impression was she was nervous. And that is a personality, by the way, it's very consistent with someone who doesn't know that much. People are intimidated. You know, I was an outsider, okay? So I'm an academic medical science and health policy expert. I didn't care about my position in the White House. I didn't need that job, I was there because people were dying and it's my country. And so, you know, I wasn't there to wield power or to make sure that I had a position intact. So when I was meeting, and I was told I had to meet with Dr. Birx, and that's fine, she was agitated a little bit and asking, and I literally did not know how long I'd be there. In fact, in the beginning it wasn't clear. It wasn't necessarily known because we were going to see how it goes. But when I got into the task force meetings, it became very obvious that it was very threatening to Dr. Birx and and others, partly because they had wheeled, this is my own opinion, but they were busy with their entourages walking into a room full of non-medical people, the task force, and the other Covid meetings that were being held. And so, in my opinion, most people are sort of intimidated and somewhat deferential to people that are doctors or PhDs or scientists, and so they don't feel comfortable speaking out.

[01:09:22] Dr. Scott Atlas
And so when she would speak, okay, there was a natural deference to her or Dr. Fauci. I wasn't there to be deferential, I was there to say the truth, and I was sort of, frankly, a little bit, I was frantic by this point because the data was known for months, and the lockdowns were literally killing people and destroying our children on top of it. And so I wasn't really, I didn't care about making friends, I wanted to do whatever I could to change the the dialog and inform people. And so I would walk into a task force meeting, and in the first one, Vice President Pence says, well, Scott, what do you think about, one of the first couple, about the risk to children? And I said, well, and I had about 15, 20 manuscripts of the current data in my briefcase. I had all. I already discussed everything with all the epidemiologists who I knew, and so I gave a ten minute presentation on the data. And basically the bottom line is, it's extraordinarily low risk for healthy children and schools should open, and the data was known all over Europe. All over Western European peer nations, they were opening their schools from the Netherlands, Italy, France, Sweden, even in the face of lockdowns, they knew that the risk to children was low and they were opening the schools. And the harms to children were extremely high of not opening schools.

[01:10:52] Dr. Scott Atlas
Pence then turns to Dr. Birx and Fauci and says, well, what do you think? There was silence. They had no data. In fact, there was never a single task force meeting, not one, where any of the other doctors brought in a scientific paper. Zero. And Dr. Birx's only comment, at that meeting and in the in the future was, you're an outlier. Okay, that's not a scientific rebuttal. There's no data there. And then at that same meeting, I remember this vividly because it was so, really tragically depressing the level of incompetence and lack of knowledge in these doctors on the task force. He turned to Dr. Redfield and said, what do you think, Bob, about the risk to children in opening schools? And Redfield leaned back -- and this is after massive data known, published all over the world -- he leaned back and he said, well, let's just say the jury's still out... And so, I was sort of, I didn't know what to say, and then we just went on as if my presentation didn't exist. And this was a repeated pattern. I mean, these people, I have never worked with such low-level people. And I always used to say, none of these people could be an assistant professor in the departments that I worked in.

[01:12:17] Del Bigtree
Wow. That's an incredible statement. And watching it from the outside, because our show has been very diligent in following all the science. We were reporting on Israel, the study, as you're saying, Sweden, Denmark, all of these studies were coming out. We were so clear what was going on, and that was my future. What are they looking at in there? What are they looking at? How are they, you know, all of these just random, let's flatten the curve. We're going to flatten the curve and then that goes whipping by, and that just seemed to be a way to just start taking away all of our rights. And I think it was supposed to be 14 days or something like that, it goes on forever. What was your opinion of flatten the curve? Was that the right move at the moment?

[01:12:55] Dr. Scott Atlas
Okay, so flatten the curve was the statement of Dr. Birx back in the spring, early on. 15 days to slow the spread or flatten the curve. And I think that, if we if we want to be completely fair, which we do, it is rational to try a very short-term measure to flatten the curve. Now, the key here is what does flatten the curve mean? Flatten the curve means slow, bring down the peak of cases and prolong that. Why? So that we can function as hospitals. So that we can treat people with other illnesses, not just with COVID. Rather than overwhelm hospitals. And this was a reaction to what was seen in Italy, where they did have hospitals overrun. And a lot of that, frankly, is that their hospital system is a disaster.

[01:13:49] Del Bigtree
Is a disaster. Much older population, in Lombardia and these places where they're having serious issues.
[01:13:55] Dr. Scott Atlas
That's right. And there were reasons why they were overrun. But it's rational. It's reasonable to say, okay, let's try two weeks of flattening the curve. But you'll notice something here that's very important. There was never a goal or even a possibility of reducing the number of deaths or cases with flattening the curve. If you want to be a math person, you would say the area under the curve doesn't change with flattening the curve. The total number of cases, the total number of deaths, that was not even the goal, okay? It was just simply slowing things down. Of course, that didn't really work. And what happened, though, is what the problem was. What happened was, it became stop all cases of COVID. And so you ask what data were they using? There were these sophomoric tabulations of cases. Cases per day, cases per week, based upon a non-surveillance level of testing so it was erratic. The numbers were irrelevant because every state, every place was testing for different criteria.

[01:15:01] Del Bigtree
I want to drill into this because you talk about in the book, and it's kind of a funny part, where you talk about how Birx keeps flying into the room with these arbitrary colored charts of infection cases that they're seeing in different states, comparing one state to another. You're weighing in saying, well, hold on a second, they're using totally different criteria. They're testing at different levels. One's wearing masks, clearly this one is doing better than this one. Like the masks had nothing to do, we don't have any basis for, where's the baseline on your information, right. Tell me about this. I mean, how this arbitrary nature that you reference a lot of times when talking about Dr. Birx.

[01:15:42] Dr. Scott Atlas
So here's the issue, is that there was no critical thinking being done. And actually the stuff isn't that complicated. But what we saw from Dr. Birx, for example, is there were charts made up. First, it started with three colors. These were arbitrarily assigned colors, red for danger, yellow for well, we're a little bit worried, green for okay., we feel good. Okay. I mean, you might think that's a reasonable thing to do if you had a scientifically valid reason for putting those numbers in. There's no valid reason for just simply saying, okay, if we have 0 to 4% versus 4 to 10, versus greater than ten, we're just going to assign these green, yellow, and red. That's what was done. And so this was very arbitrary. And really, I mean, I was shocked, this is not science at all. And then what it evolved into was, to make it more scientific, there were five colors. We divided this. We, Dr. Birx, divided this into oh, we're going to say five colors. We're going to go from red to green, but we're going to have five gradations. As if dividing inferred that....

[01:16:50] Del Bigtree
A little rainbow in there. Some nuance.

[01:16:52] Dr. Scott Atlas
Yeah. I mean, you know, there's no validity to the numbers. It was one of the many times where I was looking around the room saying, am I the only one who's hearing this? I mean, this was really sort of a combination of discussions that you read about in the book "Catch-22," and the Mad Hatter's tea party in "Alice in Wonderland." Just totally illogical circular discussion going on. And you bring up the mask issue. Okay, this is...you have to realize now, we're talking six months after everyone was insisting that masks were proven, even though they had been disproven months and months before, even by the CDC.

[01:17:28] Del Bigtree
Yes. Fauci, the one thing he had right was when he first answered about masks.

[01:17:32] Dr. Scott Atlas
When he first answered, in his emails that were uncovered, masks couldn't work because the size of the virus is smaller than the hole in a surgical mask, let alone a cloth mask. But the CDC had published all this data in May 2020. Masks didn't work to either stop the spread or to protect the wearer. That's fact. Anyone who says otherwise is really flat earther. But separate from that, there were places, there were times in the task force meetings. By this point, it took me only a couple of meetings to get really frustrated with it to the point of being, knowing these people are refractory to fact. And so, at one point in, say, September, Fauci holds up a chart, and Redfield did the same at a different meeting, saying, oh, I have proof that masks work. And the first thing I said was, well, I thought you knew masks worked for the last seven months. Why is there a need to say you have proof that masks work? But Redfield holds up a chart and says, well, this, we put the masks on and after the mask came on, the cases came down. So I'm sitting there thinking, you know, frankly, oh, my God. I mean, this is not, this is so low level.

[01:18:39] Dr. Scott Atlas
That's like saying the sun came up and therefore, you know, the cases came down that day. I mean, I don't know what he's correlating. And I didn't say anything because it was just, frankly, it was just, it was, I didn't even, I was speechless. And someone who was non-medical, purely non-medical staff person said, well, Dr. Redfield, why couldn't it be that the cases just came down at the same time that the masks. And he didn't have an answer for this? This is like insane. And another time Fauci did the same thing, comparing two states. He said, well, you know, I have proof that masks work. This was arbitrarily announced in the room. And so he says, in one state with mask mandates, the cases came down. In another state, the cases went up without a mask mandate. And so, one of the other non-medical people, Seema Verma, the head of Medicare and Medicaid, says, well, Tony, you know that's not true, there's a bunch of differences between these two states and everything. Why would you assign that as a cause and effect? Again, no answer. I mean, it was so low level, it's almost embarrassing to be affiliated with a group like that. It's shocking, I think for the....

[01:19:50] Del Bigtree
Because you have so many confounding issues to be there, and the one that you argue the most throughout this book, and we watched you when you were being heard, was what about herd immunity? How about the fact that when the infections went up, now all those people that were infected suddenly have herd immunity. We're dri-, so, is it possible that we've sort of hit the maximum load with this virus and that's why things are coming down? But Birx kept trying to claim, no, it's the lockdowns that are doing it.
[01:20:16] Dr. Scott Atlas

Yeah, well, I mean, the fact is that, and this is I think very important to understand is, it was known since 2006, the classic articles on pandemics that lockdowns didn’t work and they harm people, they were destructive. So this isn't new territory. But you have to wonder, why did somebody think that lockdowns would work and why did the public believe it? And I think there were, it's really because there were two lies told. Number one lie was that if you said the lockdowns should be removed, you were somehow choosing the economy over lives. Okay, and that was a frank lie because for decades in the economics literature, we knew that severe economic downturns killed people. And the second lie that was told to the public was that if you choose to say you shouldn't be locking down, you're calling for, let it rip. So-called herd immunity strategy. And that was a lie. I never called for letting it rip. I called for increasing protection of older people and people who were more vulnerable. I called for increasing testing, and I can get into that. But the point was that that was somehow distorted as let it rip.

[01:21:32] Dr. Scott Atlas

When I talked about herd immunity, I was describing the biologically known fact that that is how virus infections that are raging through a population come down. No one was calling for letting it rip. The point was that that's why people wanted to give widespread vaccination. That is simply a biological phenomenon. As my friend Martin Kulldorff, the Harvard epidemiologist, says, to say that you're against herd immunity is sort of like saying you’re against gravity. This is a biological phenomenon. You don’t have an opinion on herd immunity. No one in the White House ever asked or even discussed letting it rip. It was never discussed with the President, and that was all a media creation to demonize people who said no lockdowns as being dangerous. And that's called propaganda, and that kind of propaganda, to vilify people like they did with the unvaccinated, it's the same stuff. It's reminiscent to me of the most heinous regimes in modern history that used propaganda to sway the public and to make people think that this other group is dangerous.

[01:22:44] Del Bigtree

There’s a part in the book where you sort of lightly touch on your relationship with Fauci. At one point, he really asked you very pointedly about your perspective on herd immunity. And then, do you remember that moment? You know, what was happening there.

[01:23:03] Dr. Scott Atlas

Okay, so you’re probably referring to, Fauci called me up and, early on, and proposed to have a meeting. He said, let's have a meeting with all the doctors. Let's see if we have some kind of common ground and hear your perspective. And he meant Dr. Birx, Dr. Fauci, Dr. Redfield, and me. And I said, okay, that's great. I'd like to bring in some epidemiologists and others who are doing research on the pandemic, and I'd like to have a discussion. And I had already been talking to people like John Ioannidis at Stanford and Jay Bhattacharya at Stanford, and Martin Kulldorff had written me and said, he’s happy I was there and expressed interest in coming. I said I’d like to have the discussion. Okay, so Fauci immediately, that was the end of the conversation. Okay. They didn't want to have a discussion with people who were actually doing the research and knew the data. This was a group of government bureaucrats. You have to realize that Fauci was in his position for 38 years. Birx was a government bureaucrat for decades. Redfield was a government-appointed bureaucrat who had a position of authority. And their idea of this was to protect their own position, to go to the media. They had friends in the media. They would refer to Sanjay Gupta of CNN by his first name. And I never, I didn’t even know what was going on here. I had no friends in the media, that was that became obvious. And they were working, and in fact, Birx admitted early in 2021 that she, Fauci, and Redfield had a pact with each other that if Trump had fired one of them, they would all resign. And so this is not the way a scientist works, especially someone who wants to help his country. This is the way people who are bureaucrats work, who want to protect their power.

[01:24:55] Del Bigtree

Did you feel like, because you would get shredded once in a while in the media, were you, it seems like you're a little bit suspicious that Fauci is going to the media and reporting on you.

[01:25:05] Dr. Scott Atlas

So this was something I did write about in the book, was that after the first meeting at the task force that I was in on, they asked me, Vice President Pence was talking about what's happening, and this was in New York. And I had all the data on what percent of people had antibodies in New York and what neighborhoods by zip code had antibodies. It was clear that the low-income neighborhoods were really hit with the virus and they had a lot of hospitalizations, but they also had a lot of antibody protection. Because, as we know, anyone who knows anything about biology, and this is not medical school, not PhD science, not virology, not epidemiology. It's high school, AP biology.

[01:25:45] Del Bigtree

A lot of what we reported on here.

[01:25:47] Dr. Scott Atlas

Yes. And it's not complicated that if you recover from a viral infection, almost always you have very significant protection, durable protection, against a significant, serious illness. And so I was pointing this out at the first task force meeting, quoting the numbers in New York, and Birx and others were saying, oh, no, the cases started to come down because they had masks on. And I said, well, the curve of the case is going up and coming down was the same all over the world with this over time. And it comes down, because of a lot of reasons, but particularly including that people start getting antibodies and, you know, this is how virus spread happens.

[01:26:33] Del Bigtree

It's that curve we've seen in almost every.
[01:26:35] Dr. Scott Atlas
Every country in the world.

[01:26:36] Del Bigtree
Throughout time, too, and even over time we've watched, studied them.

[01:26:39] Dr. Scott Atlas
Decades, yes. And so, after the end of that meeting, there was an article written in The Washington Post, I think, saying that Scott Atlas is pushing herd immunity. I was explaining herd immunity as a phenomenon in the meeting. I mean, these people had very little knowledge, frankly. And so, at the end of that, this article was written, and of course that stuff gets picked up in national, international media. And it was an overt lie, that I was saying we should try for herd immunity or something like this, by letting the infection spread. And it was in the newspaper and there was a tremendous amount of heat from that. And I was new to this, and so I was outraged. I'm not outraged anymore because it's the way it is. The media is poison and harmful to the public good.

[01:27:34] Del Bigtree
Let's get into that a minute, because there's a moment, you call this the three, the Redfield, Fauci, and Birx, the troika, and that they sort of like, as you said, they sort of had this pact, if one of us gets fired, we all quit. As though they were sort of, you know, had a sense that they were obviously diametrically opposed to the President. But there's a moment where you seem, there's like one moment where you're really pushing to sort of change the narrative and change the approach. Let's stop testing all of the asymptomatic, healthy people and creating this fear. Let's try to start moving towards an opening-up policy. And you're able to talk them all into working together. It's a moment. Tell me about what you achieved there, and it sounded like you were there, then it would get taken away, but you really worked to get everybody to follow some science in the moment. Probably, in many ways, might have been the pinnacle of anything you've achieved, at least in that task force, it seems.

[01:28:28] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, so, I thought they were very happy, Vice President Pence and Brett Giroir, who's a doctor who was the so-called testing czar, about how their testing capacity had ramped up from essentially nothing to a million tests a day or something. I mean, it was very, very powerful. And I said, okay, now the people are still dying, you're just testing, testing, testing, which is actually a mantra of many politicians.

[01:28:57] Del Bigtree
Yeah, test, test, test...

[01:28:57] Dr. Scott Atlas
And I said, why don't you use the testing to stop people from dying. Again, this is not a brilliant thing to say, but it's obvious you should use this powerful tool, strategically, because the goal is to stop people from dying, not just to test. And so Brett Giroir said, yeah, this makes sense, let's have a call. And Giroir set up a call with me and Redfield to be talking about testing, and so Giroir ended up devising a document. And the way documents circulate in the West Wing and in the White House is that there's a draft of a document that goes around and dozens of people have input into it. And so there was a revision of the testing strategy to use the testing tool powerfully to stop or limit the dying. And I was pushing for something that was in the testing document, which was to get more frequent testing of the nursing home workers, for instance, because most cases, people were dying, at this point, 50 to 80% of deaths per state were in nursing homes. Controlled environment. I mean, you ought to be able to limit that. And I said to Birx, when she got enraged at me once because I said we should use targeted, increased strategies to stop people from dying. She said, we're already doing everything to stop people from dying who are elderly. And I said, okay, how often are you testing the nursing home workers? She said once a week.

[01:30:25] Del Bigtree
Right. They're going in and out.

[01:30:26] Dr. Scott Atlas
Yeah. They're going in and out. The nursing home residents are inside. And she said, well, once a week. And I said, well, once a week. I mean, these are people who have exposure every single day in the community. I said, you should be testing three days a week, five days a week, seven days a week, the nursing home personnel. And so, I said we should send testing, increased testing, to senior centers, non-residential. Where seniors frequent and go hang out with their friends, there was no testing going on in these places. I said we should send more testing to historically black colleges and universities. Faculty members are there, have higher risk profiles. So I pointed out we should use the testing for the point of it, which is to stop you from dying. So this document was written by Giroir and circulated around Fauci, Redfield, Birx. Everybody saw it, everybody agreed. We had a meeting about it at one of the task force meetings after the draft document was written. And this was on the agenda, everyone agreed to, instead of just testing, you know, wasting things. And by the way, tests were taking days to get the results back. It didn't even make sense what they were doing. So basically, instead of paralyzing low-risk people and closing schools for people who had very low risk, let's use it for the high-risk people.
[01:31:52] Dr. Scott Atlas
That was the gist of it. The document was changed and agreed upon, and all the doctors --Fauci, Redfield, Birx, and Giroir, and myself-- were in on the agreement at the meeting. The next meeting, there was a, at the end of that meeting, there was a point of we need to basically put a separate section about nursing homes. Redfield brought this up, which was smart. And to get to the gist of the bottom line, we all agreed, the document was brought back to re-agree on because he wanted to separate out the section. I look at the document at the end of the of that subsequent meeting, and it was totally changed back to the original document. And so I said, well, something's going on here, what's going on? And Redfield said, well, we just wanted to change the order. I said, what, the entire document that we agreed upon isn't there anymore. So they had posted the, ultimately, the revised testing agreement. The revised testing guidelines on the CDC page. And there was a hellfire of backlash by the media. All of a sudden they didn't agree. It was a CDC document. Redfield wrote and finalized the document. The media got a hold of it, said no, we don't agree with it.

[01:33:12] Del Bigtree
Alright. Well, we actually have this, let me show everyone what that looked like in the media. When everyone had finally agreed, let's change the guidelines, this is how the media treated that moment.

[01:33:22] Various news reporters
There is new guidance this morning from the CDC.

[01:33:25] Various news reporters
I have to ask you about this reversal from the CDC, it's a bit of a head-scratcher.

[01:33:30] Various news reporters
Some shocking new details about the Trump administration's pressure campaign on the CDC, from The New York Times, who reports this. Quote, "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was instructed by higher-ups within the Trump administration to modify its coronavirus testing guidelines this week to exclude people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 -- even if they have been recently exposed to the virus." That's according to two federal health officials.

[01:33:56] Dr. Alice Chen
Public health experts and epidemiologists, everyone agrees that we need more testing, not less. We have to catch every case in order to contain outbreaks. And the second thing that concerns me is the way that it was rolled out, which is that it was basically the website just changed overnight, with no announcement, no explanation, there's no backup. This is very unusual for the CDC, which has always been based in science and data.

[01:34:22] Various news reporters
They are crafting an alternate reality where COVID isn't ravaging this country.

[01:34:27] Various news reporters
The agency also did an about-face on the issue of quarantining. Previous CDC guidance prompted states like New York to implement a mandatory 14-day quarantine for anyone who traveled to a COVID hotspot On Friday, the agency quietly dropped the quarantine recommendation.

[01:34:43] Dr. Alice Chen
The only explanation that makes any sense to me is that it is a very politically motivated change.

[01:34:50] Andrew Cuomo
We're not going to follow the CDC guidance. I consider it political propaganda.

[01:35:05] Dr. Scott Atlas
No, there was a complete lie, what they said. The reality was, and the immediate interviews after that, immediate short-term interviews, Redfield said, everyone agreed on this guideline. We're not going to quarantine people just because they may have been exposed to somebody with COVID.

[01:35:25] Dr. Scott Atlas
Destroy a society.

[01:35:26] Dr. Scott Atlas
What the new, and what the new guidance said was, see your doctor and ask what you should do. He wanted to insert, Redfield, specifically, a physician into the equation about a decision. It was not about forbidding testing. And in fact, everyone agreed, including Giroir, the head of testing. Redfield, Fauci, Birx. And so because of that backlash. First of all, those statements made in the media were just completely irrational. There were millions and millions of cases that, one of the people there said that was interviewed. Well, we have to stop every case. I mean, that's ludicrous, it was impossible. That was already proven to be impossible. That isn't the point of testing. The point of testing is to stop or limit the deaths. And so, and the exposure of high risk people. And so the immediate reaction was, Giroir talking to the media, insisting that everyone agreed that it was his document, with Redfield's, Redfield was the head of the CDC. He wrote, his CDC posted the document. It was not about pressure.
[01:36:33] Del Bigtree
It didn’t matter, though. Media didn’t seem to care. I mean, this is like the tail wagging the dog in so many ways. Watching media assault a perfectly scientific and reasonable approach. Assaulting you. When you think about the media and what was happening there, how much of it do you think was just because they just saw, by you stepping in, going against the narrative that they’d been hearing, that they just thought, you are Trump, you’re just Trump’s mouthpiece. Did that hurt you?

[01:37:04] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, I, that is what happened, that they did take that tack. I think in the beginning, what was the big barrage of hate? The big barrage of hate was political, in my view. You know, people that are looking at things through a political lens, they think everyone else is political. It had nothing to do with it, for me. But what eventually happened was, I think it became far more than political. It was worldwide, it wasn’t all about Trump. It was a hysteria, it was an obsession, and it was a huge display of, not only ignorance and incompetence, but complete lack of morality and ethics. But I think we have to look at it and say, this was a complete failure of critical thinking of people. And fear, to be reasonable here, fear makes people think irrationally, do irrational things. But a lot of it was political. In fact, one of the first things I said to President Trump on my first visit to the Oval Office, when he was asking me questions and we hadn’t met before, and he asked me about hydroxychloroquine, and I said, trying to be sort of funny, but it was really true, you should have said that hydroxychloroquine does not work. Because then the NIH and the FDA would have done the study right away trying to show that it worked.

[01:38:32] Del Bigtree
There’s a moment you speak about fear, because it’s a huge part of this in the book, when, it’s a meeting and Fauci starts spouting off. I think I have this excerpt from the book, where you’re really concerned. Here it is. “As often happened, Fauci spoke up to support Dr. Birx’s concerns, saying people need to be warned even more strongly about the dangers of the virus spreading...He claimed Americans didn’t think the virus was serious, and that was the reason cases spread. I was honestly surprised. I challenged him to clarify his point, because I couldn’t believe my ears. ‘So you think people aren’t frightened enough?’ He said, ‘yes. They need to be more afraid.’ I replied, ‘I totally disagree. People are paralyzed with fear. Fear is one of the main problems at this point.’” I think this last paragraph --let’s bring it up, just the last statement here-- really is, seems to be the heart of this book. “Instilling fear in the public is absolutely counter to what a leader in public health should do. To me, it is frankly immoral, although I kept that to myself.” They were pressing fear upon us.

[01:39:34] Dr. Scott Atlas
Yes, I think that this is an unethical use of public health guidance, and it’s been rampant and repeatedly used here. And that is that instead of persuading the public with facts and data, you know, we’re a free society, supposed to be. We have thinking people. I do not underestimate the intelligence of the average person, and it’s not that complicated anyway. Yet the way that this was done throughout the pandemic, before the vaccine and after the vaccine, was instead of using data and fact, it was using filtration of information, fear, partial information. Don’t want to say that masks don’t work because we want people to be cautious. Don’t want to say that vaccines don’t stop the spread because we want them to get vaccinated. Don’t want to talk about side effects because we want them to get vaccinated. And I think this is not just wrong, I don’t even know how to say, it is literally unethical, as a public health leader, to impose fear on people. I mean, that is, I don’t know how to say that in any way better than what I have said, but I was shocked to hear Fauci explicitly say that. I mean, that was stunning to me.

[01:41:07] Del Bigtree
Let’s just, to sort of wrap this up. Obviously, all of this happens underneath, arguably probably the most controversial president we’ve had, even though I say that saying it just feels like each new president, we just get more and more divided and outraged, and now if you take that office, you are most certainly going to be indicted and tried to be arrested, and I’m not even sure if it matters what party you’re in, just the other side is going to hate it. But you got to meet a man who is an enigma, I don’t know, a very unique individual, who some would think just shoots from the hip, doesn’t seem to have a deep logic base. Others, you know, you had QAnon saying this guy is thinking 5d chess. Who is Donald Trump in your mind?

[01:41:56] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, I can give specific examples to give the color to the answer. When I was in the Oval Office with President Trump, he asked good questions, he listened thoughtfully, he understood the answers, he had common sense. I brought in several outside experts from across the country back in September of 2020, he went through us and asked individuals these very important questions about COVID, he understood the data. So to say he’s illogical, that just doesn’t fit. You know, you have a President who, this is just my opinion, but he didn’t have friends because he didn’t probably have a lot of respect for politicians. And, you know, politicians are on both sides of the two party system. He had very few people who he could trust. He trusted his families and his intimate advisors. He was under attack 24/7 in a very vicious way. I mean, the press briefing room, I was in the room to answer questions about COVID, and the reporters were, frankly, animals. And I don’t say that lightly. They’re vicious, sick people, despicable people shouting out vulgar things to the President, loss of complete human decency there. And....

[01:43:28] Del Bigtree
What’s the things. I mean, obviously not things that we’re hearing on the news.
No, well see, what happens is that the president gets up there, gives the remarks, people are, we are on the sideline to answer specific questions. If they come up, he would take his questions, then he would walk out and then I and others on the side would walk out behind him. And it was very common that the reporters were shouting out things at him. This is after the press conference was over. You know, and people calling him a murderer and a liar, and just very, I was shocked at that. It's just uncivil, poisonous media. So given all that, he was in a very difficult position. Now, that's not to excuse anything, and I'm not political at all, I was sort of an observer there of what's happening of the political side, but I would say that when you're in charge in the pandemic, okay, you own the decision making. The president owns the decisions. And when I got there, I would have been happy to see disbanding of the medical side of the task force. By the time I got there, you're talking August 2020, the policies were wrong, and they were failing, and they were failing to stop the death. They were failing to stop any spread of infection, of course, and they were destroying people.

And let's just say, we have one of the highest death rates in the world.

That's right.

This incredible medical system, a free market medical system we brag about, and our death rates are among the highest in the world. And yet I'm amazed that Birx and Tony Fauci are considered heroes at all in this.

Well, this is very important, I would like to answer this this way. The lockdowners got what they wanted. The policy in the United States for most of the country was lockdown. They own the outcomes. If you want to say that there was a good outcome, then they should be congratulated. If you want to say that there was a bad outcome, under Trump and under Biden, because, by the way, the deaths per day from COVID, it's a straight line for the first two full years, from March 2020 through April 2022. You're talking about over a year of Joe Biden. The two years of the pandemic, deaths per day, no change in the slope of the line, even with the vaccine, okay. And so the point is that the lockdowners got what they wanted. Their policy was implemented, their policy failed. There is no space, by the way, between the Trump administration policy and the policy of Fauci and Berx.

True, that's a really good point.

They got their policy implemented. There's no space. And so what we're seeing here, for your viewers, is a rewrite of history, and it's so illogical and bizarre, it's hard to even express. There's two things being said. Fauci and Birx somehow say they weren't for lockdowns. They weren't for school closures. Okay, that's a complete lie. And the second thing is, they're trying to blame the people who are opposed to what was implemented, the lockdowns, for what was failed, as implemented, the lockdown. They're trying to blame the failure of the lockdowns on people like me who opposed what was implemented. This is unacceptable. And this goes to what we need to do. We need to have a public airing of what happened.

I agree.

We have an ethical society. We need, our public needs the truth about what happened during COVID, if for no other reason than what they've been through. But the second thing is, and the important part here is, we need to have a public demand for admission of error, from Fauci, Birx, Redfield, and the lockdowners. Why? Not because we think they're going to apologize. It takes integrity to apologize, as we all know from our personal lives, when we're wrong. They're not going to apologize, they're not going to admit error. But we need to demand it because we need it in public, because otherwise the people in power, they will do it again. And they not only will do it again for a pandemic, which is inevitable, there will be more pandemics, but there will be other things. Climate change. I anticipate there will be reasons made to do lockdowns. We cannot ever have this disastrous policy ever done in a free society again. They can do it in a country that has a barbaric human rights violating government like China, but that's not what this country is supposed to be.

You, in the middle of this, and obviously nothing's going right, you're trying, you at one point, I didn't realize until I read your book that you were a part of bringing this group together for the Great Barrington Declaration. I don't want to get deep into it because we don't have a lot of time, but Sunetra Gupta, Jay Bhattacharya, Martin Kulidorr, of course, you were talking to Joseph Ladapo before that, other great luminaries. John Ioannidis. You were trying to bring them, it seems to me -- reading this book, but I was also watching it in real time-- you're trying to bring them in, you're trying to get someone in the Trump administration, will you let me put my side in front of the cameras? And it just, Birx says no. Why does Birx have that power? It just seemed to me, why didn't Donald Trump just say, here's Tony Fauci and Birx, here's Scott Atlas and Sunetra Gupta and the Great Barrington Declaration, and the world, you should all hear what they're arguing about. Because I as President am being asked to make a decision here, and it's not one-sided like you think. Why, wasn't that his job, shouldn't he have just said, here it is to the public, and if you don't arrive, then Scott Atlas is going to get the entire hour, and his group. Why did that never happen? It just seemed to me, this would have solved everything.
[01:49:17] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, it certainly would have been important, and I’ll say what exactly happened. When I first got there, which was basically August 1st, 2020, July 30th, I said, okay, I need to bring in people to speak to the President who are doing the research, because Fauci, Birx, Redfield, these are bureaucrats, they don’t know what they’re talking about, and I am not enough alone. So I brought in, I arranged a meeting, with Joe Ladapo from UCLA at the time, Cody Meissner from Tufts in Boston, Martin Kulldorff from Harvard, Jay Bhattacharya from Stanford. And we five--this is in September of 2020--we all came in to the White House, and the day before the meeting, Birx sent in --and this was arranged so that Birx could attend. The day before the meeting, these guys are already flying out there, Birx says, in an email, I’m not coming to the meeting, it’s not good for me. And I thought to myself, okay, this person cannot take the scientific debate. Okay, that’s not science. If you’re afraid to say that, you can’t have science without the debate, number one. This is obviously not the behavior of a scientist, that’s the behavior of an insecure bureaucrat, in my opinion. But in the meantime, I was called into Jared Kushner’s office right then and said, okay, the meeting’s off. And I said, well, what do you mean the meeting’s off? I think it’s actually the end of August, beginning of September, and he said, well, Birx isn’t going to come, and the secretary’s around were saying, you know, it’s going to look bad if we have it without Birx. I said, well, Birx was invited, she’s deciding not to come.

[01:50:57] Dr. Scott Atlas
This is way too important. Again, I sort of went ballistic. I said, people are dying here, I insist, they’re coming to speak to the President. And so I was told there’s five minutes, instead of what I had wanted, which was a big meeting with a press conference. And reporters asking questions, that was the point of this. But no, five minutes I got. And so I said okay. And so we went into the White House Oval Office. I told these guys, Meissner, Ladapo, Jay Bhattacharya and Martin Kulldorff be very succinct, we’re there for a few minutes, just answer his questions. Don’t go off, just answer his questions. That’s the role of an adviser. And so, the President goes in, as I said, he starts going, one by one, asking que-. The meeting went between 45 minutes and an hour. And I kept getting tapped on the shoulder by people in the Oval Office saying, you know, Scott, we have a lot of other things on the schedule here. I’m not going to interrupt the President, number one. Number two, he needs to know the information. And so we went on, he even had a video camera brought in, asking me to narrate, although that video has disappeared. But we answered his questions. And then what happened was a month or so later, I said, okay, it’s still a disaster here, I want to bring in Sunetra Gupta. So by this point, I knew Martin and Jay, and I called up Martin, I said, do you know Sunetra? And he said, well, yeah, we’re talking to Sunetra, I’m trying to get her to come to the US. And so I helped arrange her security clearance to get her to come to the US, because this is when flights were blocked, and on the way, they all stopped in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

[01:52:38] Dr. Scott Atlas
That was a way to for them to get together. I don’t think there was a real plan to do much except get together and maybe do an interview or something. And, because I had set up a meeting with Secretary Azar of Health and Human Services in the White House. And so they met there and then flew to Washington, and we four, the three Great Barrington--this was the day after the Great Barrington was written, declaration, but it was not, it was arranged way before. So we went and we we answered Azar’s questions. And of course, that was reported by the poisonous media as somehow, he had a bunch of herd immunity advocates in there trying to push for letting it rip, and that was never even discussed, there was never a discussion of that. We went through the data on children, on schools, on the harms from closing schools, on the fallacy of lockdowns, on how to protect the elderly even better. That was the purpose of the meeting. So I thought we were gaining traction. But again, the media was, frankly, very harmful to the public good. I mean, there’s a good comparison study of the media of America versus non-American English speaking media, 90-plus percent of stories during 2020 about the pandemic by American media were quantifiably negative, even when the cases were going down. But outside the US, 54% were negative. They had the same pandemic.

[01:54:05] Del Bigtree
Were these people, Birx and them, I mean, we had these solutions that could have reduced, as you brought up, hydroxychloroquine. Did you ever hear them saying, like there’s been a lot of censorship, huge censorship going on, we need to shut down, like perhaps Doctor Peter McCullough and his conversation about hydroxychloroquine, or Dr. Pierre Kory and ivermectin. Did you hear anything like going out of the way to sort of shut that conversation down?

[01:54:31] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, I didn’t hear anything specific about these people or any kind of censorship, but what did happen was Redfield went to the press and said something like, everything Scott Atlas says is wrong. Of course, everything I said was 100% right. And it was known when I said it, it wasn’t new knowledge, by the way, I want to make that clear. This was not learned during 2020 late, or 2021 or 2022. It was all known in spring of 2020 that masks didn’t work, that children were very, very low risk, that you got protection after getting COVID and recovering, you know, all these things were known. But what they did was use their leverage and, with their friends in the media, to delegitimize people like me. That is a form of censorship. Not only that, but there was censorship that was uncovered in the emails directly commandeered by Fauci and, unconscionably, the head of the NIH, Francis Collins. That was later, after October. And then, of course.
[01:55:40] Del Bigtree
You found out they had a hit basically on the Great Barrington Declaration. We need to strike this down. So, I mean, you’re very busy and I know you have to get on the run, I want to ask you this question because you’re in the middle of it. We’re all sitting here saying, why? Why was the virus that we now know for certain had a death rate, I think it’s coming at about 0.035%, you know, across, so really right as, perhaps, a bad flu. 3% maybe amongst the most significantly at risk at the highest points. But it was so specific, so easy to have protected. Great Barrington Declaration made perfect sense. Let’s just bubble wrap every nursing home in the world. The rest of us get out, let’s live our lives. If there’s a vaccine here, great, but if not, colleges should stay open, you made great points. Colleges should stay open. Yes, they’re catching it, but they’re all walking around asymptomatic, not a single hospitalization or death on a college. Instead, they shut them down, sent them home to infect their families, their grandparents, and keep spreading this thing. You were making sense the whole time. It made perfect, reasonable science sense, as you said, it wasn’t brand new, it was basically high school science. What do you think is the motivation in America, especially? Did they make a crisis destroy our lives to get rid of Donald Trump as President of the United States? Is that a motivating factor, or is it to push a vaccine program?

[01:57:12] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, the question about motive and why is always the most difficult, so it’s sort of, it’s partly a guess. I saw many different motivations, but they had a common end point, okay. I’m not a believer that everyone was, first of all, you’re giving people too much credit to assume that they had the brains to organize some kind of a massive....

[01:57:35] Del Bigtree
I say that a lot on this show too, yes.

[01:57:36] Dr. Scott Atlas
Yes, They’re very non, they’re low-level thinkers, frankly, and that’s sort of a broad brush, obviously. But I honestly think there were motivations of power. Power is very important to people, particularly people who are suddenly famous. Like you take a guy who’s an epidemiologist, who’s never seen a tv screen, and all of a sudden he becomes well known. You see a complicit, potentially guilty in the funding of research that caused the virus, right. We know for a fact that the NIH gave funding to the Wuhan lab. That’s in the Wuhan publications, they list the grant numbers. Okay, so if you, just hypothetical, if you were a guy who was one of the people who signed off on that funding, and then there’s this pandemic killing people, you might want to portray yourself as very, very safe, the safest person in the world. You may want to say stuff like wear two masks. You may want to say stuff like wear goggles, which Dr. Fauci said in July of 2020. So there are different motivations. There’s financial corruption, there’s no doubt. There’s a linkage with big pharma. There’s financial corruption of people, even with a subsequent position. There are people that were secretary or head of FDA is on the board of a company that owns Moderna. I mean, there were people that had their own personal motivations, and that’s very sad. And there’s also something we cannot ignore and cannot say enough really is gross, gross incompetence.

[01:59:15] Dr. Scott Atlas
You had people, Brix, Fauci, and Redfield had a common thread, by the way, in their history, which is they all worked on AIDS, HIV and AIDS. And so they, you know, Brix funded, directed funding toward Redfield’s labs, et cetera. She did postdoc work with Fauci. Their very long-standing relationship there, but they also have a common mentality of HIV. Okay, how does that virus spread? Well, that’s a virus that is stopped by barriers. That's not a respiratory virus, we all know. They had a different way to think about things that was grossly wrong. And by the way, you can look up Fauci’s history on AIDS, which is well known and well documented, where he was claiming even after it was known how AIDS spread, that well, you got to be careful, you might be able to get it through casual contact with your children in your home. This was spread. He wrote that, that was said, he wrote that. He was also all in on a vaccine for AIDS. And so he didn’t push for drug treatment of AIDS, and the same pattern is what we see here. One of the biggest failures, maybe the biggest by the NIH and the FDA during this entire thing, was they did not do, rapidly, clinical trials on drugs that were already safe and FDA approved. They didn’t do it. Instead they, he, that’s right, and this is really a huge failure that will go down as one of the historical epic failures in the management of this pandemic is they ignored easy-to-do clinical trials for drugs that were safe. And why? I don’t know. Maybe it was financial corruption, maybe it was because Trump came out prematurely and said hydroxychloroquine works, you should take it. But it became far bigger than politics, I think.

[02:00:58] Del Bigtree
Just my last question, because we sit here, we're being told by Bill Gates, World Economic Forum, WHO is trying to now use all of this to control the world the next time there's a pandemic. They seem very excited about this idea of a pandemic around the corner. It doesn’t matter that pandemics used to come like every 50 years, now, apparently, it's going to be a bi-annual experience for the world, at least it seems that way. What is...our audience is out here, I have a very intelligent audience, they’ve been following all this science you’re talking about. Many of us were trying to make a difference in this world. What do you think about the state of this country? Did we learn anything, are we ready for another pandemic, or are we on the verge of being locked down, shut down? When we think of the World Economic Forum's The Great Reset, that they seem to want to take away all of our rights as a part of these things?
[02:01:52] Dr. Scott Atlas
Well, I think we're in a precarious situation, at the very least here. What we've seen here is not only the legacy of Fauci is that he presided over the biggest failure in public health guidance ever, not only is it the massive destruction of a younger generation, particularly poor people, and shifting the burden unethically to the poor and to our children. Not only is there now a loss of trust in all guidance, but I believe part of that legacy is a complete loss of basic civility in this country. And so we have a cohesion problem. We have a moral and ethical failure of shifting the burden toward poor people and toward our children, and we have a massive failure, if you want to be going into philosophy, of what it is to be a virtuous society. The kind of society we thought we had, the kind of society you must have in a free society, in a democracy, where there's a diversity of views. And what is the biggest absence in our country? It's an absence of courage. Okay, we have a void in courage in the people. That's what we have seen, in my view, and as Aristotle has said, courage is a predicate to all other virtues. You know, you can't have a functioning moral civilization, ethical civilization, if you don't have people have the courage to speak up against wrong.

[02:07:34] Dr. Scott Atlas
And I think that, you mentioned it, it is true, we've had several Presidents in a row now that don't understand that when they're elected, they're elected to be leaders for everybody, including people who didn't vote for them. Okay, we need to reset our moral and ethical compass here. I want to make something that your public viewing may not even understand is that, we did all these mandates on children for vaccines and boosters and forced testing and did medical clinical trials on infants and toddlers that are breaking all medical ethics rules, at Stanford, at Johns Hopkins, at all of our great medical centers. They did those clinical trials with the hope that it would what, shield -- for a disease that young children have no significant risk from, healthy children-- with the hope that it would shield adults from this infection? That, I'm a father, my children are not to be used as shields for me. I'm a shield for my children. So we have to reexamine ourselves as a society. And by the way, the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, dozens of countries did not mandate vaccines for children. They had the same data, they knew what the data was. We are an outlier on what we did to our younger generation, and now have a of a younger generation that we have inflicted an obesity crisis on.

[02:07:44] Dr. Scott Atlas
52% of college-aged kids gained an average of 28 pounds during the lockdowns of 2020. That's an obesity crisis. We've created a generation of young children, toddlers, who think they are a vector of disease, that they are a danger to their parents and grandparents, that everyone's a danger to them. This is what we're grappling with. It's not the pandemic now. It's not about just reforming the funding of science, which is controlled by a cabal of people at the highest levels. We need to get decentralized funding, we need to make far more transparency in the discussions at the CDC, we need a complete housecleaning of the FDA, the CDC, and the NIH. That's going to require a real tough new President and new leadership. But we need something more. And that is we need our people, in this country, to wake up, and what I said, rise up. Rise up means speak up. Make your voices heard. This is a free society. Because when you turn around, you've lost all the freedoms that you thought you had, and that's not the kind of country we want to leave to our children.

[02:08:15] Del Bigtree
Absolutely brilliant. You have a plane to catch, I could do this all day. Dr. Scott Atlas, it has been such a pleasure.

[02:08:21] Dr. Scott Atlas
Thank you for having me.

[02:08:22] Del Bigtree
To spend this time with you. For everyone out there, Amazon tried to block your ability to buy this book, go out and get it. We only covered just some of what's in here. This is one of the most important stories of our lifetime. We have to understand this, because if we don't know our history, we are doomed to repeat it. Definitely check out the podcast that Dr. Scott Atlas does, "Independent Truths with Dr. Scott Atlas," independent.org/ScottAtlas. Just, Twitter, same thing, there it is. And all of this will be available to you if you're on our newsletter. I'm going to be joining, Aaron Siri and I are going to be on stage for the first time together. Of course, our lawyer that wins all the lawsuits for us. We're going to be at Freedom Fest in just a few weeks. You can get tickets. You can get discount tickets through ICAN50. This is what FreedomFest is all about.

[02:08:44] FreedomFest promo
We want to bring people together to have really deep conversations about liberty.

[02:09:21] FreedomFest promo
We know what needs to be done, and as a free people, we have an obligation to do it.

[02:09:26] FreedomFest promo
Capitalism, free market capitalism especially, is being recognized as the savior for humanity.

[02:09:35] FreedomFest promo
This is a record-breaking FreedomFest.

[02:09:39] FreedomFest promo
The language of the unconscious is the language of dreams.

[02:09:44] FreedomFest promo
We can take our future back for us and our children.
[02:07:50] FreedomFest promo
Freedom, here and now, ee are in good company.

[02:08:02] Del Bigtree
It's amazing to get to sit with a man that took on his civic duty to try and protect humanity, to stand for his Constitution of the United States of America, to try and fight to open our schools, to keep our businesses open, to have a well-rounded concept of policy. Unfortunately, no matter how hard he tried, he was thwarted by those lesser thinkers, low-level thinkers, as he called them. And unfortunately, a President that didn't seem to have enough strength, I guess, to really just put that team of brilliant scientists in front of the media so that we could have all asked the appropriate questions and maybe have seen some change. We have talked a lot about COVID, and I would say of all the conversations I've ever wanted to have, Scott Atlas represents sort of the most important one to me. You just heard what happened in many ways. Definitely check out this book. So important that you understand this and wrap your head around it to see what these players are. These are not heroes. Deborah Birx and Tony Fauci, and these people in the task force represent the greatest failure in history when it comes to health. Over a million people died from COVID. The vaccines didn't do anything, probably causing even more harm than good. Deaths, all of it. But no matter what, you cannot say this was a success. We had more deaths than the Third World.

[02:09:34] Del Bigtree
Africa did better than us. India did better than us. That is an outrage when they have no money. We're one of the richest nations, if not the richest nation in the world, and yet all we did was destroy our children, destroy our jobs, destroy our economy. And as Dr. Atlas put it so well, you can't hang it on what administration. It went without pause from Donald Trump into Joe Biden. And what it is his call to action for all of us: be brave, grow some courage. We allowed this to happen. We all went along with it. We protected our jobs, we took our shots, just because we were afraid to stand up. We didn't speak our truth. We didn't know how big our movement was. If we'd have known that inside of our own office buildings, 30 to 50% of us were all looking at losing our jobs, but we didn't threaten to walk out together the way the troika of Redfield and Fauci and Birx had. We should have used their method inside of every one of our schools and every one of our workplaces to say, we're all going to work out together, if you do try to fire one of us, it's a great idea. We should have done it to stop the insanity that these morons foisted upon us and killed us with. We have to take account of what took place here.

[02:10:57] Del Bigtree
Science has a reckoning to do, and that's what we spend a lot of our time here, the debates need to happen. But none of that will happen if we, as people, do not grow some courage. We've got to find our truth, we've got to find our strength. We've got to realize how powerful we are, every one of us. We're all God's children, but if we don't stand up for those inalienable rights that are endowed into us by our Creator, if we let our governments of the world rob us of that, and the World Economic Forums and the Bill Gates and the low-level thinkers to make our decisions for us, that will be on us. We've got to get involved. We've got to start reading. We've got to start watching. As I've said it before, I think you should be signed up to every single website of someone that's running for President, let's see what they all have to say. Get involved. Stop letting bumper stickers decide how you're going to make your decisions. These aren't five word answers, they're the future of humanity. It's in our hands. We've shown what we can do, we've had a lot of success. Now let's start standing together, shoulder to shoulder, dreaming together of what this nation once was and how it could be even better, if we dream, and we become courageous. I'll see you next week on The HighWire.