

**COLUMNISTS | Opinion**

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Coronavirus COVID-19**Add Topic**

COVID may have leaked out of a Chinese lab, after all. So much for 'misinformation.'

Turns out, the individuals who raised concerns during the COVID-19 debate weren't so crazy after all. Unfortunately, the damage is done to those who dared go against the 'correct' narrative.

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Nearly three years ago, a reporter asked then-President Donald Trump whether he had seen evidence that gave him a “high degree of confidence” that COVID-19 had emerged from a lab in China.

"Yes, I have. Yes, I have," Trump said. "And I think the World Health Organization should be ashamed of themselves because they're like the public relations agency for China."

In Trump fashion, he later took that sentiment and made it more inflammatory by using “Wuhan virus” or “Chinese virus” when talking about COVID-19. The left was quick to label such phrases as racist, but also disregarded *why* the president used those words.

Earlier in 2020, Arkansas GOP Sen. Tom Cotton said the following: “We don’t have evidence that this disease originated there (the Wuhan lab), but because of China’s duplicity and dishonesty from the beginning, we need to at least ask the question to see what the evidence says, and China right now is not giving evidence on that question at all.”

A 'fringe' and 'debunked' theory?

Much like they did with Trump, many in the news media denounced Cotton's comments as supporting a "fringe" theory and promulgating a "debunked" conspiracy.

Could an accident have caused COVID-19?: Why the Wuhan lab-leak theory shouldn't be dismissed

'I remember it very well': Dr. Fauci describes a secret 2020 meeting to talk about COVID origins

In 2021, a reporter - not an opinion writer like myself - at The New York Times who covers the pandemic and global health wrote on Twitter that maybe "someday" we'll stop talking about the "lab leak theory" and its "racist roots." She later deleted that tweet after ensuing backlash.

It turns out that there was cause for skepticism about the virus' roots.

A Wall Street Journal report from the weekend revealed how the U.S. Energy Department has joined the FBI in saying that COVID-19 likely spread from a Chinese lab. The Energy Department holds heft as it oversees U.S. laboratories, and it made its determination after new intelligence came to light.

Similarly, on Tuesday, FBI Director Christopher Wray gave Fox News the first public confirmation of the bureau's assessment that the virus "most likely" originated from a lab.

Other intelligence agencies still contend that the virus resulted from a natural transmission or are undecided.

Public deserves to know the truth

The White House is spinning the latest news as there's no "consensus" within the federal government on COVID's origins.

That's fine to admit, but the public deserves to know this is still an ongoing discussion.

No 'consensus' on COVID origin: U.S. agencies haven't agreed on the

origins of COVID-19 virus in wake of controversial report

The real threat is still out there: We'll never know the full truth about COVID-19 origins. Political infighting won't help.

The same holds true when it comes to efforts to combat the virus. These measures also deserved a robust and open debate, but that isn't what has happened. From the government to the news media to pre-Elon Musk Twitter, there were concerted efforts to suppress so-called misinformation.

Until recently, anyone - even scientists and doctors - who raised questions about the effectiveness of masks, lockdowns or school closures was labeled a science denier or a kooky right-winger.

Those who supported the government mandates and didn't ask questions were considered enlightened.

Now, there's evidence that masks don't work, lockdowns were ineffective and school closures did both academic and emotional damage to children.

Will COVID shutdowns continue?: Dr. Fauci is open to more school shutdowns? You've got to be kidding me.

Masks aren't as infallible as we were told

Masks have been one of the biggest touchstones in the COVID-19 debate, and we've been told for years that they are integral to "control the spread."

Maybe not.

A comprehensive review of research from the respected Cochrane Library reported in January that wearing masks - regardless of type - makes "little to no difference" in the transmission of illnesses like COVID-19.

Turns out, the individuals - often moms - who raised concerns weren't so crazy after all.

Unfortunately, the damage is done to those who dared go against the “correct” narrative.

Look at what happened to Jennifer Sey, the former global brand president at Levi’s. She was forced out of her job last year for calling out the harm that remote schooling and forced masking were doing to kids. After she appeared on Fox News talking about her concerns, her colleagues thought that was a step beyond the pale.

The fallout of the forced narrative

In light of the recent news on the possible COVID-19 lab leak and the ineffectiveness of masks, Sey is continuing to push back. As she tweeted this week:

“We're not paranoid. We were blacklisted. We were censored. We were fired & ousted from our jobs. We were called terrorists & murderers. We lost friends & colleagues. We were interrogated. We were vilified as ‘conspiracy theorists’ for saying things now accepted as true. Our friends and colleagues conspired against us.”

What’s ironic is that the measures taken by the Biden administration and the news media to “protect” people from misinformation will backfire by erasing more trust in these institutions.

There are still many unanswered questions about COVID-19, but it’s far better to admit this than force a narrative that later proves untrue.

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