

## THE EPOCH TIMES

PREMIUM VIEWPOINTS

# Why Did So Many Institutions Fail?



(Dave Chan/AFP via Getty Images)



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## *Commentary*

I've spent the better part of three years trying to figure out a central question. Why did so many individuals and institutions fail to protect our rights and liberties and thus set our country and the entire Western world on the path to decline? The failure was grave and existential. The betrayals were for the ages.

The courts were supposed to protect our liberties based on the Bill of Rights. They did not.

The scientists were supposed to rally around facts and known truth. They did not.

The economists were supposed to defend a functioning market. For the most part, they did not.

The media was supposed to operate as a watchdog of the politicians. They acquiesced to propaganda.

The digital platforms were supposed to guarantee free speech. They operated as censors instead.

The academy was supposed to be a sanctuary for truth. They bought and enforced the lies, quarantining the well, covering students' faces, and jabbing kids for no reason.

The think tanks funded by private monies were supposed to provide an advocacy buffer on behalf of citizens and research, standing up to the trends of the time. Instead, they caved and went silent when we needed them the most.

The politicians were supposed to compete with each other and offer different points of view. They mostly fell apart and became a uniparty, with nearly every sitting politician but just a few cowering in fear.

The states were supposed to resist impositions of the federal government but 49 of 50 sold out and went along with the demands of the hegemon. The red states came around gradually but months of damage were irreversible.

What is the reason? There isn't only one but there is a central theme to them all. All of these individuals, managers, and institutions chose fear over principle and truth. And with that choice of fear came state violence.

And it isn't as if there was one moment in which the choice was made to go silent or otherwise quietly sign up. It happened one day at a time or even one hour at a time. When the lockdowns were first announced, they were localized: mayors canceling events for fear of COVID spread. Maybe they were under the impression that this truly was a plague that would wipe out the population, perhaps even believing the ridiculous propaganda videos coming out of China. Even then, there was never a chance that locking down would solve anything.

And yet the facts were easy enough to check. There really was no excuse since we had a good grip on the nature of the issue from mid-February at least or even much earlier. But people in a position to do something to protect freedoms against the tyrants chose to give in to fear rather than rally around facts.

They hoped that things would die down a bit and the environment would cool down and then they would perhaps point out certain obvious realities. But that day never arrived. March 8 came and went, then March 12, then March 16, then 18, and the lockdowns, wild spending, and brutal business and school closures continued on and on.

Why didn't more people speak out? Why didn't the courts work? Why didn't all the people who today say that they knew it was wrong from the start speak out when it was most necessary to do so? It was risk avoidance. They didn't want to be wrong. They didn't want to lose their funding. They didn't want to be screamed at on social media. They didn't want to be "canceled," so they chose silence even in the face of grotesque outrages.

And if you think about it, once individuals and institutions started down this path of lies, there was really no point at which it became obvious that it was time to turn back. I know this from having been in very close contact with people at institutions that stayed silent. They were frustrated at their bosses but their bosses had bosses and so on and no one wanted to be guilty of insubordination, lest they lose their secure income.

Everyone had a good excuse. When months and then even a year or two years went by, and the silence became embarrassing, there was only one next step: just wait for the subject to change and pretend like nothing ever happened. Never admit wrongdoing, act as if the silence was intentional and strategically correct the whole time.

This is more or less where we are today. None of the major institutions in society today have bragging rights at all. Not academia, not media, not science, not courts, not think tanks, not corporations, not governors, and not politicians. There are some exceptions and most of them were brave and in a position to speak or otherwise paid a huge price for their words and analysis. But for the most part, the same people who utterly failed to stand up and denounce evil now are deeply interested in having the whole of society simply move on and forget.

At some point, little by little, things began to change. Courts began to side with the Bill of Rights. States began to repeal restrictions. Governors shaped up. Churches opened their doors, some in defiance. Businesses stepped up and said no more. Universities stopped oppressing their students. Doctors defied their medical boards and started prescribing therapeutics. And the mandates started falling one by one. Finally, even the mainstream media started publishing actual facts.

How and why did this change happen? What broke the fear? What drove the change? It was public opinion that started shifting, people getting educated, getting the arguments right, people looking at the facts, and they were, in turn, informed by a small group of people who took the risk to speak out for truth when the whole world seemed to be going the other way.

This shift in public opinion is what gave cover to judges, corporate leaders, educational leaders, pastors, editors, and even managers finally to say that they would no longer live the lie and instead would stand up for what's right.

It took far too long—what should have taken days took years instead—and the carnage left in the wake of cowardice is truly unspeakable. So much has been broken. So much trust has been lost. So many leading institutions have been discredited. And so many intellectuals who advertised their services as brave warriors have proven themselves to be nothing more than regime sycophants. There continues to be far too much silence about this whole problem simply because so many people and institutions want to keep it that way.

The whole experience should serve as a lesson to us. The dissent began with a small minority. Newspapers like *The Epoch Times* deserve so much credit and fame and so too politicians such as Rep. Thomas Massie (R- Ky.) and journalists like James Bovard and so many others. Indeed, Brownstone Institute will soon publish a book that examines these people who got it right from the beginning and saw through the nonsense to say what is true.

The lesson here is that it isn't possible to overvalue the role of moral courage in sustaining a functioning society and essential freedoms. We think we have systems in place to protect them but with our own eyes, we saw all these protections fail. Their silence was a choice for violence over humane values. What saved us wasn't systems but courage and truth and the willingness to deploy both, despite a massive failure all around.

As we look to the future and try to figure out how to stop this from happening again, let's focus on what really matters: indefatigable persistence in saying what is true in a time of ubiquitous lies. Ultimately, this comes down to the individual and the desire to live for principle rather than live in fear.

*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*