

OPINION &gt; VIEWPOINTS

# How to Restore Freedom



(Hannah Busing/Unsplash.com)



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## *Commentary*

This past week has been spent at in-person meetings, first at the Brownstone Institute annual conference and gala in Texas and currently at Hillsdale College in Michigan. The former was glorious for me because the institution only came into existence 2 1/2 years ago and yet feels robust and lasting.

Hillsdale College has a much longer history, but I thought I was coming here to speak to an economics class of 20 people (I must have made that up in my mind), but instead there seem to be some 750 people here. My talk to these esteemed guests is tonight. Wish me luck.

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What a beautiful community in both places. They have both developed organically out of shared convictions and a determination to not relent to the terrible trends of our time. Each gathering includes friends from previous ones, some people meeting in person for the first time, and others who had no prior connection at all. But the bonds developed in such events are lasting.

Listen, I still can't entirely shake off the feeling of good fortune that we're able to be together as groups, foster friendship, develop relationships of meaning, get to know new people, and form these bonds. It's never lost on me that only a few years ago, the powers that be banned such meetings, even in our own homes.

Initially, I thought it was all an egregious error. It was the models that told our masters that we had to stay away from each other in the name of controlling infectious disease. They believed that if they made us behave a certain way, the bad bug would recede or evaporate or be otherwise held at bay until they could inoculate the population.

The rules blocking assembly and association—euphemistically called social distancing—just so happened to work another way. We

couldn't find others who similarly regarded the whole lockdown agenda as a fiasco. We had to suffer and grumble alone. This went on for months and gave our masters a free hand to experiment with the population.

I'm no longer naive enough to believe that it was all a mistake. I'm now much more inclined to believe that it was all deliberate. The whole point was to keep us from finding each other, sharing ideas, and developing communities of resistance. But you have to admit that this is a scary thought. Are there really some people in a position of power so malicious as to concoct such a disaster regardless of the devastation it inflicted on the population?

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The answer is sadly yes, there are such people. Power works like a drug that pushes its victims into the background of the mental space of those pulling the levers. It's a psychological mechanism. There's a job to do. No need to worry about innocents. The mission alone is what matters, regardless of rights, freedom, laws, and so on. The reason is always the same: emergency.

The emergency was decreed on March 13, 2020. That's what unleashed hell on the American public and even the world. All these years later, we're dealing with the aftermath: the ill-health, the learning losses, the fear, the violence in our cities, the moral nihilism, the economic trauma, the vast increase in government power, and the boiling anger of the public underneath it all.

We still don't know how this story ends. But this much I know: There's no easy technical fix for this. No one piece of legislation will solve it. No one court decision is going to repair things. No one candidate for office is capable of rebuilding the freedoms we need and must have back. No change of control is going to finish the job of restoring the Constitution. Our rights won't magically return with the right people in power.

This is an awesome realization. It amounts to the seemingly sad fact that we have to do the job ourselves from within and as an outgrowth of the communities of which we're part. This is the essential job. Your fellow warriors are your friends, family, neighbors, and church members, and the people you meet in our organizations of interest, in your travels, and in the course of your professional lives.

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In other words, it's just us. That's a sobering realization. But it's also our opportunity.

I had a sense of this two weeks ago as I was speaking at a supper club we started two years ago. I was suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of blessing that I was there with friends, trusted associates, and so many other special people. This is precisely what the lockdowns were supposed to stop. There's a reason they want to end such communities. We're more easily controlled outside of communities and impossible to control fully within them.

Let's return to the great book "Democracy in America" by Alexis de Tocqueville. I've read it several times and always appreciated it in

the abstract. His main theme was that mediating institutions in the United States are the way that Americans govern themselves—those many institutions that stand between the individual and the central state. These can be our local government, but they're most robustly our families, churches, civic associations, clubs of interest, places we shop and get to know the merchants, and so on.

Even the federal character of the American government itself is part of this. We used to say “these United States” instead of “the United States.” We were citizens of our respective states first, back when the 10th Amendment was taken seriously. The whole structure was devolved to the lowest levels insofar as possible, while the center was only engaged when absolutely necessary.

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All these institutions form a bulwark that guards freedom. It was this weekend that the excellent scholar Dr. Aaron Kheriaty made a point I had heretofore missed: The lockdowns were structured to smash all these institutions and form a relationship only between the individual and some faceless master in a faraway place issuing edicts. In other words, they tried to destroy the very thing that makes this a fabulous country.

How do we rebuild? Yes, politics can help. Good court decisions are always welcome. Brave politicians are needed. But none of this is going to accomplish the goal. The great rebuilding will come from within our own lives and communities, as inspired by hope, driven by courage, powered by affection and loyalty, and assured by moral

determination. In other words, the answer to the question is all around us, right where we are.

People often ask me for answers to the myriad problems in the world. I'm not the one to give them. You are. Care for your health, your family, your personal finances, your safety, and your mental well-being. Reach out to others. Be a good friend and neighbor. Assist in the heroic tasks by building a new freedom within your own reach. Become ungovernable by those who have so overreached. This is the path forward.

The answer is before our eyes if only we're willing to look, believe, and act.

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

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Jeffrey A. Tucker is the founder and president of the Brownstone Institute, and the author of many thousands of articles in the scholarly and popular press, as well as 10 books in five languages, most recently "Liberty or Lockdown." He is also the editor of The Best of Mises. He writes a daily column on economics for The Epoch Times and speaks widely on the topics of economics, technology, social philosophy, and culture.



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