

# The Corona Crisis has “Broken our Relationships and Crushed our Souls”, “Courageous Voices have Emerged to Speak to the Hysteria of our Time”

My Interview with COVID Blogger Susan Dunham. Dr. Julie Ponesse

By [Susan Dunham](#) and [Dr. Julie Ponesse](#)

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*The events of the last two years have ravaged us, have shaken us to the core, have broken our relationships and crushed our souls. Those facts are so obvious and so devastating that it almost feels irreverent to mention them. But, at the same time, something miraculous has happened: a battalion of the world’s brightest, most persistent and courageous voices has emerged to speak to the hysteria of our time.*

I came across one of these voices a few months ago after a friend sent me an article called “What We Learned From Hating the Unvaccinated.”

If this sounds familiar to you, then you might already be a follower of [Susan Dunham](#). It wasn’t too long before I became one of Susan’s loyal acolytes, giddily ready to devour anything with her name on it.

Her writing always strikes a cord, always says exactly what I have, more subconsciously, been thinking and feeling. Susan explores themes to do with COVID, yes, but in the course of doing so, she drops a number of other pearls of wisdom. One of my favourites is: “Since 9/11, every threat to come down the mainstream news cycle seemed to huddle us around the same consensus, that some fresh element of our liberty was making the world hurt—and that we were selfish to hold on to it.” (From “For the common good: How Covid exposed the war on liberty”).

I pretty quickly became curious about who Susan is, what underpins such sharp, observant writing. Where is she from? What is her story? How is she so brave? Is she vaccinated? I had to know.

A Google search didn't yield anything satisfying. Her "[Medium](#)" page doesn't list a website. She has no Twitter page (potentially telling in itself) and her Instagram bio is relatively unilluminating. It says she is from Toronto but other internet searches suggest she is Australian so that didn't do much to dissolve the mystery. Her name, of course, is just common enough to make it impossible to pinpoint which "Susan Dunham" she might be: the North Toronto teacher, the New York State REMAX agent, the woman whose obituary appears on a Watertown, Ontario Funeral home page?

So, who is the real Susan Dunham? The answer might surprise you. (It will also explain why this interview is done in print.)

I hope you will enjoy my interview with the curious, mysterious, and always compelling Susan Dunham.

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Dr. Julie Ponesse (DJP): I have been following you on Instagram, under the name "susankaydunham," for several months now. You describe yourself as a "Writer and promoter of courageous critical thinking in times of hysteria." It is some of the best writing about the pandemic (and related issues) I have seen. You have a way of distilling what I have been thinking, cutting right to the heart of the issues, and expressing yourself with beautiful, poetic prose. Let's start by setting the stage for readers.

Why do you say we are living in times of hysteria?

Susan Dunham (SD): Thank you for arranging this interview, Julie. It's really a great honour. The last few years have left many of us with the feeling that something isn't right, and while there's a lot of information out there that can be argued over, what we all agree upon is that the collective response to the COVID pandemic points to a problem that is much bigger than the virus itself. I try to capture with as much precision as I can what exactly that is, and—most importantly—help others to see it too.

The first red flag has been the hysteria. We've all seen the popular phrase on t-shirts and tote bags, "Keep Calm and Carry On." That came from an unused WW2 English poster design in the event that Germany invaded London. So even in a situation like that, calm would've been the order. And we've been used to that being the message from government during large-scale crises: stay cool. Because whatever the threat may be, erratic overreactions from an oversensitive public can cause more damage than the threat itself. It was common sense, no matter the issue.

But with COVID, overreaction was all we got, and it was all we were encouraged to do. The public health institutions whose job it is to assess risk and issue balanced guidance based on cost and benefit abandoned any such duty and went whole hog on prevention. They signalled to the world that no cost is too high to prevent a single COVID infection. And this created a hysterical population that became fixated on COVID mitigation to the exclusion of all reason and proportionality. I wrote about it at length in my first article, "Moral Blinding: How the COVID Prevention Fetish Killed Critical Thinking." That is still, I think, my best article, even though my later ones are much more popular. In it I tackle how all the safety rituals right down to the constant well-wishing to "be safe," threw us into a type of cult-like trance.



And because of it, we saw all the asinine behaviour we've become all too acquainted with: yelling at the unmasked, hugging family members through plastic sheets, vilifying the unvaccinated, jumping into moving traffic to avoid someone on a sidewalk—not to mention, shutting down the entire economy for weeks on end and heroizing couch vegetation. The messaging we got only brought out the worst from a scared public, and it was no accident.

DJP: Would you ever have thought we could get to the point in Canada where critical thinking requires so much courage?

SD: Actually, yes. After the election of Donald Trump, I saw something being rolled into place in the US that didn't bode well for outlier thinkers anywhere in the west. There was this push to psychoanalyze the Trump voter like they were all maniacs who had fallen victim to bad thinking. Any actual reasons they gave for how they voted got pried open by countless commentators and stuffed with anything that could make those ideas toxic.

And I don't think we can overstate the effect of this. It was almost a kind of alchemy, whereby innocuous words and ideas got turned into this blank canvas for anything that could make them ugly. "Make America Great Again" became one and the same with "Make America White Again," and it was because of the work—day in and day out—of pundits, celebrities, talk show hosts, journalists, and editors who were incentivized to redefine meaning.

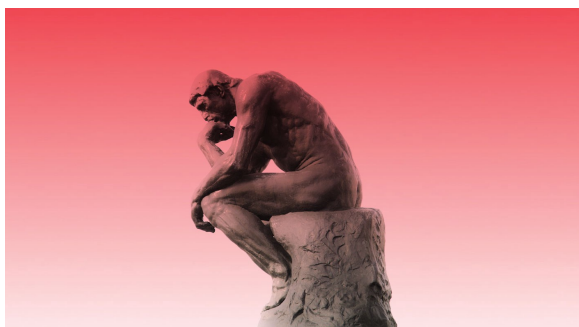
Words became modelling clay, and mainstream media used the same kind of artistry that gets taught in classes on poetry studies in representing the views of our fellow countrymen. This made it incredibly easy to totally control the views of the people. Simply define all opposition as morally repugnant, and only the brave will defy.

So it wasn't going to matter anymore whether it was through critical thinking and sound reasoning that you might one day adopt an unsanctioned viewpoint; your neighbours and peers would be made to hate you for it, so you better think twice.

DJP: Let's talk about some of the specific issues that have come up in your writing. You have written some powerfully incisive words about masking, for example: "The mask functioned like a visible record of one's goodwill, which became eerily compulsory to demonstrate in order to be left unmolested in public..." Why do you think masking became such a powerful virtue signal? What was happening culturally (prior to the last two years) to get us to the point where masks have such power? And how would you respond to those who say that at least masks do no harm?

SD: I'm laughing! I love this question because I can tell that you know the answer, and it's somewhere I haven't had a chance yet to go in my writing. The truth is, we had been perfectly groomed years in advance for the mask to function, socially, the way it did. History

will compare notes on this, but I think it started on Yale campus during the fall semester of 2015.



A video came out showing a group of students encircling the husband of a dormitory faculty resident. They were yelling at him for his wife's response to student complaints about offensive Halloween costumes. Rather than supporting a campus ban on offensive dress as they wanted, she welcomed anyone who might take offence with another's costume to deal with it themselves. The students accused her of failing to make them safe and wanted (I suppose) to send her husband home with the message. I think some heads rolled, faculty-side, because of it. But that to me was the birth of the "safe space," when all the back-corner discussions about the new imperative to shelter "marginalized identities" from the offence of "micro-aggressions" truly broke into the collective consciousness.

The mask then came along in 2020 in front of this backdrop of safety and comfort. We had already been well-acquainted with our responsibility as citizens to make the vulnerable feel safe. Not necessarily to be safe, but to feel safe. We had been learning to tiptoe around language, which by the day was revealing new landmines and trap doors. All the good-hearted among us were already so used to tripping over their own tongues to keep others feeling safe that when a visible signifier came along in the form of the mask that could outwardly demonstrate one's willingness to make others feel safe, it took like kindling.

DJP: Now that the scientific evidence is mounting in support of those who opposed the mandates, we are seeing some significant reversals (e.g. very few universities and employers now impose vaccine mandates, ArriveCAN is about to become optional). But this makes it seem like mandates were wrong *only* because they weren't supported by science. Is that the only reason they were wrong, in your view?

SD: No, and in fact, it really worries me that a whole year of unwarranted medical discrimination can be absolved of all guilt because the science changed. I cringe when I read opinions about the vaccine mandate being wrong because the shot was leaky. It could have been the perfect pumpkin pie, and it would still be wrong to coerce a medical treatment.

And in Canada, we were more than coerced; we were bullied by our own Prime Minister, who actively encouraged Canadians to fear and despise anyone who did not want the shot. That is psychological warfare, not public health, and if we're going to pretend that only "the science" made it wrong, then we're admitting that it can happen again tomorrow if new science demands it. And if that's ok, then we're not a functioning democracy, but a dictatorship under science.

We have long talked about a separation between church and state so that religious institutions couldn't impose edicts that would usurp human rights, but we need to consider how the church has recently been swapped out with science. It has its own high priests, its

symbols and sacraments of worship, and its own hunger for our trust. Just like the good book, it's man that interprets science and squeezes from it oppressive policy.

So, no — we can't give a hall pass to the people who chose to choke us with "the science," who hid behind the shield of its objectivity in order to set up a system of perfect social control that enriched the wealthy, impoverished the poor, divided families, and made us slaves to drug and tech companies. We need to be very clear to the people who think that all of this went away because we either complied enough or because the science changed: it didn't. It went away because men and women who were brave enough to stand up and say no did precisely that. Mark my words that history will yet sing their praises.

DJP: To me, one of the most fascinating groups in society these days, small though it is, is made up of those who chose to be vaccinated but who refused to participate in the vaccine passport system to go to restaurants, to travel, etc. You wrote: "Every time we produced our vac/cine passport to have a meal, or to board a plane, we were voting yes, that our bodies are indeed public property—available to be pried into and regulated, the moment health policy can justify it." What do you have to say about (and to) these people?

SD: I don't think there's anyone who exposes the corruption of the system better than them. They're totally impervious to any of the labels that get assigned to the rest of the resisters. They can't be called conspiracy theorists, because most of that group tends to believe there is something nefarious about the vaccine itself, so didn't take it. And you can't call them selfish or inconsiderate, because they "stepped up" and did that thing which was supposed to be our duty to do. You certainly can't call them anti-science or anti-vax—obviously.

They are, in the simplest and most crass terms, anti-bullshit. They took the shot and left on the table all the authoritarian stuff that tried to piggyback onto it. To them, getting vaccinated meant getting vaccinated, not subscribing to a system of compliance, tracking, and surveillance. Those are, in fact, two completely separate things, and the mere fact that we're expected to accept them as one and the same exposes what the go-along-get-alongs deny is staring them in the face: a deliberate agenda for power and control.

DJP: The most common explanations I hear from those who follow the narrative are "all these experts can't be wrong" and "if you can't trust MSM, who can you trust." How do you think these ideas came to such prominence, causing us even to discount our own critical thinking and ignore evidence to the contrary?

SD: The expert, as an archetype, is an interesting thing because they live and breathe their work, but at the same time are stuck inside a bubble of incestuous ideas, taking in the same recycled air as all of the others in their field. In practice, they don't each go out and get their own information from first principles, but read and disseminate a handful of accepted studies. So we can already see how little work needs to be done in order to exert the right influence onto a pool of experts. A finger can be put on the scale in just the right place and suddenly a whole field of professionals are parroting a manipulated message with "expert authority."

Separate, but a part of this: we want a guru. And that might be part of human nature because we're all put on this planet not having a clue, so we seek that sherpa in the flesh. In the past, we found that figure within religion—maybe a pastor, a Rabi, an imam, a yogi, or whatever. Now that we're by and large an atheistic, unspiritual society, we fill that gap with the science and the tech expert, in other words, the high priests of a "Technotronic era."



So we fauned over Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx, the way we worshipped Steve Jobs, or Mark Zuckerberg, or Elon Musk—these Promethean figures who bring fire to the people. We’re conditioned, now in the absence of spirituality to cede all better judgement to the figure of the professional expert. And this virtually guarantees that to control the public, one must control the experts. So it’s a two-part dynamic.

DJP: You wrote something very poignant in one of your recent articles:

“Since 9/11, every threat to come down the mainstream news cycle seemed to huddle us around the same consensus, that some fresh element of our liberty was making the world hurt—and that we were selfish to hold on to it.”

There is something hauntingly beautiful about the way you put this: “making the world hurt.” That’s exactly what it feels like.

Can you elaborate?

SD: I think we’ve all felt a push into a new mode of global citizenry, in which the individual is increasingly being called into awareness of the world’s problems, rather than the problems that might be unique to their country, or to themselves. We’ve been forced to listen, finally, to the world’s heartbeat — and this, I think, can be beautiful in theory, but it doesn’t feel authentic.

Global leaders inflate us with all the emotions of a world melting under the heat of our greed, centuries of colonialism, and the latest proxy war effort abroad. And all it does is puts out a haze of constant, circulating guilt, which becomes a pretext for all these various things that a good global citizen needs to do.

We’re given “easy” local solutions, like considering insect protein instead of meat, scoring one another based on skin colour, and in Europe today, making do with “a little less” energy in your home. The list goes on. It makes us wonder whether all of these solutions are truly a means to an end, or simply the end in and of themselves. Does the world truly hurt in the way we’re being told it does, or is this knock-off brand of global empathy just an effective emotional pretext for bringing gradual pain upon the people?

Trauma, guilt, atonement: it seems like a cyclical formula for hammering our thoughts and actions into formation. Global citizenship starts to feel more like an enrolment into a global infantry class, and it’s all terribly creepy.

DJP: In various ways, our lives, emotions, and decisions are being managed like never before. Your recent piece on the Georgia Guidestones addresses this issue. You say,



“The Georgia Guidestones offered a modern-day ‘Ten Commandments’ for achieving a civilization in balance with nature. But their first requirements called for strict maintenance of our population at 500 million and a eugenics program to select only the best progeny.

The Guidestones made a confident case that the human race needs to be managed, thinned, and controlled in order to survive itself and preserve the planet....Today we have thoroughly normalized the Georgia Guidestones’ idea that we are dirty and poisonous to the Earth.”

This will sound like the stuff of grand conspiracy theories to many and yet we are now seeing increasing rates of all-cause mortality, globally. Is population reduction a real concern to you? Can you elaborate?

SD: I think population reduction certainly is the greatest hope of the Guidestone makers, along with everyone in their circle. But I don’t think they’ll get their way in the end. I think they’ve tried and may continue trying. But I think humanity has some secrets we’ve yet to discover.



I can’t shake the analogy that we are collectively like a child with so much potential, but we’re in the custody of a guardian who is something like the evil stepmother of fairy tales, filling our heads with all the ideas necessary to justify their treatment of us. It seems like a deeply resonant archetype, and we know how the story ends.

DJP: What do you think is going on in the minds of people today we might describe as ‘waking up’? That seems to me to be the least enviable position to be in right now, to feel the ground falling out from under your feet and taking with it all you thought you could rely on (the beliefs that government is good, the media are honest, mass consensus can’t be wrong.)

SD: They’re very angry. And I suspect it’s mostly directed for now at the people who haven’t yet opened their eyes as they have. The first shock is to wake up and see everyone else still in the trance, to shake them by the shoulders in panic, and then with horror get attacked for it.

They’re used to the truth being something that is easy to say and are running miles of catch-up to connect all the dots in figuring out why that isn’t the case.

DJP: Is “Sue Dunham” your real name?

SD: No. It’s a “pseu-donym.” Nobody gets it. I’m a bit disappointed but recognize that I buried it a bit by using the long form of “Susan.” Sue Dunham was the most honest fake name I could come up with: literally pseu-donym. I imagined people seething with anger

over my writing, then getting even more upset halfway through their Google search when the phonetics finally hit them. Oh, it makes me giddy! ...But I think it was too subtle.

DJP: This is fascinating to me — troubling but fascinating — that someone feels the need to be anonymous to express opinions counter to the accepted narrative. Why did you feel the need to be anonymous? What do you think that says about the current state of civil liberty in Canada?

SD: Being an outlier in one's thinking used to be an easy thing. It was welcomed by some and either made one a maverick or a curiosity. And that was certainly true for me. But there's been this case building in the court of the public opinion that, more and more, it's critical for the safety of others that we toe the line on an increasing number of subjects.

COVID couldn't have been better timed to explode this trend. Suddenly the wrong kinds of words could pack the ICUs. When I decided to start writing under a pseudonym, it was at the height of COVID hysteria. People not only blamed "COVIDIOTS" (anyone unwilling to cower in total fear of the virus) for reckless endangerment but for prolonging the pain of lockdown. Even after learning how selective and oftentimes mild the virus could be, people still took the side of our captors, urging compliance if for no other reason than to regain our freedom. And course that's completely backward.

So I had a pretty negative view of the public when I first started writing. I didn't trust the world at large to know my real name. And it all got confirmed once the vaccines came out along with new levels of vitriol.

But I think that anonymous writing has been an effective way to keep discussions about my work focused on the issues rather than my personality, which so often ends up distracting from a speaker's message. I often tell the people who know me that I have nothing unique to say, no uniquely personal story, only a unique way of saying what people are already thinking. So perhaps Susan Dunham is the people's ghostwriter, and it makes total sense that nobody knows the real Sue.

DJP: What advice do you have for those who regrettably complied over the last two years, who remained silent when they wanted to speak out? Is it just a matter of courage? How can we encourage ourselves to do what we believe to be right? What are some little steps we can take?

SD: I have the feeling there will be other opportunities for them to stand up and be counted. And if they're angry with themselves for giving in this time, that should inspire the next fight.

I don't think they have to be courageous as much as they have to be proud. They should take pride in their convictions because those define who they are.

If they had to compromise—for whatever reason—then that gives them a unique and powerful voice. They should use it and share how they felt, being steamrolled by peer pressure and government propaganda. They don't need to write erudite essays or long posts on social media. It can be a spoken comment when the moment strikes. Nobody will fault them for their feelings, and they might find their thoughts becoming contagious.

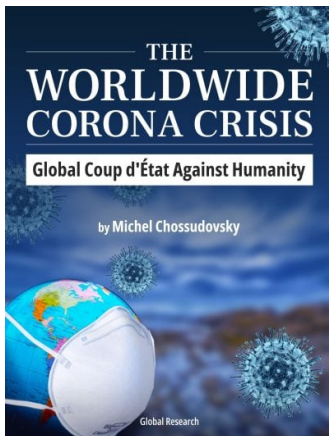
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*Dr. Julie Ponesse is the Ethics Scholar for The Democracy Fund and author of the new book: My Choice: The Ethical Case Against Covid19 Vaccine Mandates. Dr. Ponesse's focus is on educating Canadians about civil liberties.*

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