

Where Does Courage Come From?

Analysis by [Tessa Lena](#)

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Leslie Manookian is a veteran health freedom warrior and the founder of Health Freedom Defend Fund
- › Years ago, she walked away from a very lucrative career as a Wall Street exec after realizing she was “working for the wrong team”
- › Leslie’s organization has filed over a dozen big “freedom” lawsuits since 2020, including her lawsuit against the travel mask mandate – which she won
- › Now is the time for courage, and courage often comes during the difficult times – and carries us through

This story, inspired by my conversation with Leslie Manookian, is about integrity, love, and spiritual spine.

We all know how the past three years have been. The past three years have been tough. They have also been a dramatic litmus test for everything in our lives: our character, our relationships, and our ability to say no to abuse and fight back.

We usually discover our courage when we realize that it’s a matter of life and death. When things get tough and abusive, when the world stop making sense, we get baffled at first but then we usually find our spine.

And so in 2020, when the outside world went nuts, life got very real – and suddenly, it became very clear what each of us stood for.

Our superficial relationships? Gone. Gone like bubbles in the wind. But as our wobbly relationships went down in flames, our soul relationships got stronger, and new soul relationships appeared. And since we are all unique individuals, walking our unique paths, the experiences we brought to 2020 were also unique. Some of us discovered the abusive streak of the world in 2020 for the first time, and some of us had been “getting ready for this” for years. Leslie Manookian is the latter camp.

Leslie's Background

Leslie Manookian is a veteran of health freedom movement. She is a fierce health freedom advocate and an extraordinary woman. When I was interviewing her, I was moved beyond words.

Among other things, Leslie is the person whom we can thank for **not having to wear a mask on the plane**. It was her organization's lawsuit that struck down the federal travel mandate in 2022. Even the hit piece that Bloomberg Magazine did on Leslie last year acknowledged that.

Leslie is a stunning human being who is not afraid to put her actions where her mouth is. Years ago, she walked away from a star career as a very successful Wall Street executive – and from “many millions of dollars” – to fight for her truth and be a health freedom advocate.

One day in Leslie's “past life” as a Director at Alliance Capital in London managing their European Growth Portfolio Management and Research, she had a conversation with a big pharmaceutical company about their troubled stock. The stock was troubled because the company was about to release a “blockbuster” drug (according to Leslie, it's a drug we know) but the word had gotten out that people were dying in their clinical trials.

And so, to reassure the big investors, the pharmaceutical company set up meetings and revealed that, yes, unfortunately, the FDA would have them put a

black box warning onto the insert – but not to worry, they were still going to sell a whole lot of that drug.

Now, some people would just take that information in, shrink on the inside from the cynicism they'd imbibed, and carry on – but not Leslie! She realized that she had been naively “playing for the wrong team,” and, after she had fully processed the new information and revised her assumptions about the world, she resigned.

Around that same time, for personal reasons, Leslie encountered the world of homeopathy. (Today, she is certified as a homeopath.) When she first heard her homeopathy instructor mention vaccine injuries in class, Leslie, who had assumed that vaccines were the greatest invention of modern medicine, raised her hand and inquired what on Earth he was talking about.

Initially, she didn't believe his words and thought he was crazy to say that. But, an analyst at heart. Leslie went ahead and grabbed a book on the topic, read it in one sitting, discovered hundreds of scientific citations demonstrating vaccine injury, and “just sobbed and sobbed.”

She was shocked that things were that cynical – that vaccine injuries were well-documented, well-known, and not even rare – and yet the pharmaceutical giants cared not about the suffering of the people – and just lied. And they lied and bribed and gaslit so effectively that your average “educated person” had no clue and just assumed that only crazy antiscientific yokels could distrust the vaccines.

From there, Leslie made a documentary, [The Greater Good](#). And in 2020, Leslie, who was onto the scam right away, founded [Health Freedom Defense Fund](#), on behalf of which she had filed [over a dozen lawsuits](#) for freedom and dignity – with great success.

Some of the important things that we talked about in the interview were the key pieces of legislation that had paved the way for 2020.

Patriot Act

The notorious **Patriot Act** (“Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism”) was passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush on Oct. 26, 2001, following 9/11.

It allowed the alphabet agencies to spy on Americans and collect personal information without a warrant, to conduct “Sneak and Peek” searches (enter homes and offices when no one was there and not leave a notice), and other egregious breaches of privacy that were at least theoretically unthinkable prior to 2001.

But don’t take my word for it, here is what the **ACLU** had to say about it in 2011, when they still had vital signs:



PREP ACT of 2005

The Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act is a tort liability shield intended to protect different providers of “countermeasures,” including vaccine manufacturers, from financial or legal risk in the event of a declared public health emergency. It was passed by Congress and signed into law by George W. Bush in December 2005.

The PREP Act **authorizes** the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to issue a PREP Act declaration. The declaration then provides immunity from liability (except for willful misconduct) for claims:

- *of loss caused, arising out of, relating to, or resulting from administration or use of countermeasures to diseases, threats and conditions*
- *determined by the Secretary to constitute a present, or credible risk of a future public health emergency*
- *to entities and individuals involved in the development, manufacture, testing, distribution, administration, and use of such countermeasures*

“A PREP Act declaration is **specifically for the purpose of providing immunity from liability [emphasis mine]**, and is different from, and not dependent on, other emergency declarations.” So that was in 2005, and in 2020, they had to just **issue a declaration**, and legal liability was gone.

Suspension of Habeas Corpus

Here is an **explanation** of habeas corpus and its history from the Rutherford Institute:

“Translated as ‘you should have the body’ habeas corpus [enshrined in the Constitution] is a legal action, or writ, by which those imprisoned unlawfully can seek relief from their imprisonment. Derived from English common law, habeas corpus first appeared in the Magna Carta of 1215 and is the oldest human right in the history of English-speaking civilization.

The doctrine of habeas corpus stems from the requirement that a government must either charge a person or let him go free.”

Prior to the 20th century, habeas corpus was suspended twice. “It was first suspended on April 27, 1861, in Maryland and parts of midwestern states by President Abraham Lincoln in response to riots and local militia action, as well as the threat that Maryland would secede from the Union.

The second suspension of habeas corpus occurred ... in the early 1870s, when President Ulysses S. Grant responded to civil rights violations by the Ku Klux Klan. It was then limited to nine counties in South Carolina.”

“In 1996, following the Oklahoma City bombing, Congress passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), which limited the use of the federal writ of habeas corpus in two ways. First, it imposed a one-year statute of limitations on bringing the writ ... Second, it dramatically increased the federal judiciary’s deference to decisions previously made in state court proceedings either on appeal or in a state court habeas corpus action.”

“Following 9/11, President Bush made several attempts with varying degrees of success to revoke the right of habeas corpus ... The first effort by President Bush to avoid habeas corpus proceedings for suspects was the Presidential Military Order of November 13, 2001.

This gave the president the power to detain as ‘enemy combatants’ non-citizens suspected of having a connection to terrorists or terrorism. These individuals could then be held without charge indefinitely, without a court hearing and without access to a lawyer.”

In 2006, Bush signed the Military Commissions Act in 2006. “The Act eliminated habeas corpus by allowing non-citizen enemy combatants to be held indefinitely in a military prison without access to a lawyer.” (That position was **challenged** by the Supreme Court in 2008.)

Then on in May 2007, Bush “issued a ‘presidential directive’ that allows him to assume control of the federal government following a ‘catastrophic emergency.’ Although the directive doesn’t specifically identify the types of emergencies that would qualify as “catastrophic,” the language is so broad that it could include almost anything that might have a major impact on the country. This directive would in effect make any president the final authority in such an emergency.”

And then, the NDAA signed by Obama on December 31, 2011, solidified the bipartisan totalitarian trend. As Leslie writes in her **Substack**, “I Used to Believe,” when Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act (**NDAA**) in 2011, he removed the writ of habeas corpus and the right to a lawyer – at the mere command of the President.

Some trivia: in March 2015, a New York Supreme Court justice issued an order to "show cause & writ of habeas corpus" in a proceeding [on behalf of two chimpanzees](#) used in research at Stony Brook University. The justice, Barbara Jaffe, amended her order later in the day by striking the reference to habeas corpus.

In March 2020, Attorney General Barr [submitted a proposal](#) that asked to effectively suspend habeas corpus. To quote Newsweek: "Attorney General William Barr proposed granting himself immense, permanent powers extending far past the needs posed by this threat.

For example, the proposal grants Barr personally the power to ask any chief judge to hold a citizen, "whenever the district court is fully or partially closed by virtue of any natural disaster, civil disobedience, or other emergency situation." What qualifies as such disobedience or emergency is left, once again, to Barr. So Barr would be able to hold any American – man, woman or child – indefinitely at his own discretion, whether related to COVID-19 or not, without trial."

Where is Newsweek today, now that in my home state of new York, the governor and the state AG want to be able to [indefinitely detain American citizens in isolations camps](#)?!

Smith–Mundt Act

The U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, known as [Smith–Mundt Act](#), was and signed into law by President Harry S. Truman on January 27, 1948.

"The Act was developed to regulate broadcasting of programs for foreign audiences produced under the guidance by the State Department, and it prohibited domestic dissemination of materials produced by such programs as one of its provisions.

The original version of the Act was amended by the [Smith–Mundt Modernization Act of 2012](#) which allowed for materials produced by the State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) to be disseminated (widely spread) within the United States."

I'd like to end the story with an excerpt of the interview.

In Leslie's Own Words (An Excerpt From the Transcript)

I was, you know, very, very concerned about what I was seeing. I'd been doing research for 20 years on all the different ways that the powers that be were changing laws putting in place legislation in order to facilitate a public health takeover. And I say this because if you look back at 2001, you know, 9/11 and 2001, within 45 days, they introduced the Patriot Act.

And two weeks after that they introduced the model state emergency health Powers Act legislation. So first the Patriot Act, what did that do? It's so important for people to understand. It allowed the government to conduct warrantless searches on us, something that's a constitutionally protected, right. They're not allowed to search you or surveil you, absent some good reason and a court order, but they just started doing it.

And their justification was terrorism, right. So be very, very afraid of terrorism. And then two weeks after they signed that legislation, the Patriot Act, into law, they introduced the Model State Emergency Health Powers Act legislation. And this legislation has been since then, adopted in whole or in part in 43 states across the United States. And what this legislation did will just shock you when you think about it now, today.

But back then people didn't understand the implications of it, I don't think. Of course, those of us who were studying it did, and understood what the heck was going on. But they were really paving the way for 2020. And with the Model State Emergency Health Powers Act legislation did was to accord extraordinary power to governors, to state governors, and state health departments, in the event of a public health emergency. Isn't that convenient?

And everyone was, like, oh, you're a bunch of conspiracy theorists, crazy people, they'll never do that. They would never use a public health emergency to shut down, you know, travel between states or to, you know, contact trace you or to suspend law in the States,

right? They never do something as crazy as that. But that's exactly what they were doing.

Everything that happened in 2020 and afterwards was facilitated, in part at least, by that legislation. Literally, it says that you can do anything you want, that the governor and the state health department can enact any means necessary in the event of a public health emergency. And that, as long as there's a state of emergency declared, which is what the federal government did, then they have the cover to enact an emergency in their states.

And then all of a sudden, they get all of this wild rule, you know, authority making. In Idaho where I live, the governor actually changed, he suspended statute. He literally just suspended laws that protected parental rights, and would allow parents to not know where their children were, if they were taken into custody by the state.

This is when, you know, there were rumors, and actually, there were job listings to establish quarantine centers, where they would put minors. In Washington State, I think they established eight of them. And they were talking about doing it in the state of Idaho as well. And there was a huge public outcry. And so they sort of backed away from it but the point is, this is where it ends, right.

So they did those two things. And then 2005, they passed the PREP Act, the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act. And that, of course, removed any financial or legal liability from any company that produced what's called a "medical countermeasure." Think about a test a mask or a vaccine, in the event that a public health emergency is declared.

So as soon as Prep Act was declared in 2020, anybody who created any of these products, supposedly in response to the crisis, were protected. They had liability shields, and you basically can't touch them, unless you can prove willful misconduct. So that happened in 2005.

And then they submitted [suspended] the writ of habeas corpus ... And the writ of habeas corpus is something that's been around for almost 1000 years since the Magna Carta, maybe 800 years since the Magna Carta, and that says that if you are arrested

and imprisoned, you have the right to appear before a judge to appeal against wrongful imprisonment, seems like a pretty important aspect of any kind of free country, right?

Well, in the end, you would think that it would be something that would be unassailable in the United States, but they, they removed that. And they said, "Well, listen, it only applies to terrorists, that we can deem someone an enemy combatant or a threat. And then we can hold them indefinitely. But, you know, it's not for the average person."

But that's not really the truth. They it's their discretion. It's not well defined. It's not well defined what they mean by these people who can be detained. So arguably, it could extend to anybody who speaks out against the government or does what we do. So they did that. [...]

Now, the NDAA is the bill, it's a recurring bill that Congress approves of every single year. And what it does is it approves the spending budget for the Pentagon. And they put all sorts of other stuff in there. So they repealed [amended] something called the Smith-Mundt act in 2012.

And that was something that had been in place for, I think, about 70 years. And what the Smith Mundt Act said was that the CIA is prohibited from propagandizing American citizens propagandizing American citizens means knowingly, willfully disseminating misleading, untruthful information lies to the American public in order to manipulate them into a certain response.

Radio Free America is one of the tools of the CIA abroad in order to manipulate other countries, but it had been prohibited in the United States for at least 70 years.

Well, they repealed that. And to those who were criticizing this policy move, they said, you know, don't worry, don't worry, we're doing this, but it's not a danger, because we don't have a program set up to do this. And there's no funding for it, even if we did have a program.

Well, in 2013, they set up the program, and in 2016, they funded it through the NDAA again. And nobody paid attention under Obama, who was supposed to stand for

transparency, right? I think it's one of the tools of the state is that whenever one sides guy or woman or whatever says person is in power, then that side relaxes, and doesn't pay attention to what is happening because they think that their interests are being served, and that they're safe.

And so they ran through the things that are most anathema to one party's, you know, ideals when their person is in power. And, you know, I think about like, I don't know if you know this, but um, when Obama was in office, he repealed the 30 year moratorium on offshore drilling. Now, if Bush and Cheney had done that, there would have been a massive outcry about it. But when Obama did it, nobody said a real word.

And so I think it's the same thing, just like, I think if Biden had started operation warm speed, there would have been a huge public outcry. But when Trump did it, conservatives were silent about it. Well, you know, I think they kind of grinned and bore it. And I think that's kind of one of the ways that they manipulate us divide us is by putting us to sleep thinking that our interests are being served.

And so we don't pay as much attention. But anyway, so all this is happening. And then 2020 rolls around. And within the first few days of January of 2020, we were starting to hear reports that there was some you know, deadly thing coming out of China. And I said to my husband, oh my gosh, you mark my words, they're starting this in China, because China is going to show the rest of the world how to do this, how and they're going to lock down, they're gonna do all these things.

And he's told me, "honey, don't be silly. That's not going to happen." And, of course, it's exactly what happened. Everything that I feared would happen, happened, and it's because of all of the research I've done.

And so, early on in 2020, I had met a very accomplished attorney, who was connected to all these other really accomplished attorneys. They were little trial lawyers litigators, and I started telling them about what I thought was really going on. And I decided I was going to start Health Freedom Defense Fund, so I'd be ready to start filing suits when they really enacted the most draconian measures, and so that's what happened.

So I started Health Freedom Defense Fund, it was incorporated in August of 2020. And we've actually filed more than 12 lawsuits since then. And that's a lot. We're not talking about just little lawsuits, we're talking about huge lawsuits, three against the federal government, we've sued the Los Angeles Unified School District twice, the second biggest school district in the nation.

We've sued the school system in Arizona, Nike, we've sued Disney, a city and a school district in Idaho. We've filed a ton of lawsuits, and our three lawsuits are the federal ... the one that people will know the most against the federal government is the travel mask mandate, because that's the reason that you don't have to wear a mask, because of Health Freedom Defense Fund's lawsuit challenging the Biden administration's travel mask mandate.

You know, when they told everybody a year into this whole thing, that you have to wear a mask, all of a sudden, if you try, if you go on a plane, or on a bus, any kind of travel conveyance that is either interstate, or takes money from the federal government. So we struck that down.

And anyway, we just got so much going on, a bunch of other initiatives as well. And it was just because I would just say, Tessa, because I was truly called by God.

And if it hadn't been for that, and hadn't been for the experience that I had on Wall Street, I don't think I would have believed everything I was leaning, you know, but because I'd heard the CEO say, oh, yeah, we're gonna kill some people, in effect, that's what he said, we're gonna kill some people but we'll make a ton of money doing it.

So don't worry, you'll make a lot of money. If I hadn't heard those kinds of things. I'm not so sure I would have fully appreciated everything that I was learning or been prompted to do what I would have done.

About the Author

To find more of Tessa Lena's work, be sure to check out her bio, [Tessa Fights Robots](#).