

Louise Kuo Habakus Remarks

Feb. 24, 2011

Press Conference in front of Microsoft Headquarters

My name is Louise Kuo Habakus. Along with my colleague, Mary Holland, I'm the co-editor and contributing author of a new book, *Vaccine Epidemic: How Corporate Greed, Biased Science, and Coercive Government Threaten Our Human Rights, Our Health, and Our Children*. I'm also the Director of the Center for Personal Rights. In my advocacy work, I speak on behalf of citizens and organizations devoted to vaccine safety and autism. Thank you for coming to our press conference.

We're standing here today, in anger and in protest, in front of Microsoft's executive offices in midtown Manhattan. We are here to demand an apology from Microsoft chairman Bill Gates. On CNN earlier this month, while he was interviewed by Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Mr. Gates said that the "anti-vaccine efforts kill children." Let's be very clear. Who is Mr. Gates referring to when he says anti-vaccine? You know and I know that they—we—are the people who care about vaccine safety. We are a large and growing community of people who are pro-vaccine safety science, pro-vaccination choice, and pro-justice for the vaccine injured. We support vaccine development and safety improvements. We are not, and never have been, anti-vaccine.

When Bill Gates said that anti-vaccine efforts kill children, his statement went unchallenged, and not only by Sanjay Gupta. Not one single business, government, medical, scientific, religious or other leader challenged his reckless and hurtful words on a major media outlet.

This is more than deeply disappointing... it is wrong. It is wrong for Mr. Gates to demean and devalue the work of people who advocate for safer vaccines, including the parents of children who died and were massively harmed by their vaccines. "They kill children" is an egregious and irresponsible statement. It is a statement of intolerance. Bill Gates is a leader in corporate America. He is an iconic entrepreneur. And he is at the helm of one of the largest charitable foundations in the world. His messaging matters.

We stand here today because we—the pro-vaccine safety community—refuse to allow his statement to stand uncontested. Too many families have sustained terrible suffering and loss because they vaccinated their children to uphold the public health. This includes the 2,500 who have received over \$2 billion in compensation from the government. Bill Gates cannot dismiss these people with name calling and a wave of his hand. Mr. Gates must acknowledge that vaccines harm and cause death to some. The people and organizations behind this press conference, including over 100,000 people represented by the Coalition for Vaccine Safety, have two requests. We want an apology. And because we want his apology to come with an *understanding*, we are also asking him to read our book, *Vaccine Epidemic*. After this press conference, I will enter Microsoft's building and ask that this book be given to Mr. Gates.

Powerful organizations promote vaccines. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has pledged \$10 billion over the next decade for global vaccine development, production, and distribution. Mr. Gates stands with powerful allies—including the U.S. government, the World Health Organization, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and huge, multinational pharmaceutical corporations. These entities have a responsibility to tell the whole truth about vaccines, as a serious medical intervention with risks as well as benefits.

Vaccine Epidemic tells the sides of the story that you have never heard. It is a survival guide for all people who get vaccines for themselves or their children. Our goal is to open up the debate and foster dialogue. We want to shine a light on the whole truth about the childhood vaccine program. Unlike individuals, such as Bill Gates, who unfortunately seeks to shut debate down.

Government officials state that vaccination policy is the victim of its own success. American parents understand that it is not so simple. In the U.S., children are chronically ill, neurologically impaired, developmentally challenged, and yes, dying at record rates, which have been rising during the same period as the dramatic increase in childhood vaccines. Today, about 1% of American children have autism, 1 in 6 is learning disabled, and 1 in 9 has asthma. The U.S. ranks 46th in national infant mortality, lagging behind every developed country except Poland.

Why?

Dr. Bernadine Healy, former director of the National Institutes of Health, health editor for US News & World Report, gave us a quote for *Vaccine Epidemic*. Dr. Healy said “There are unanswered questions about vaccine safety.” She is joined, on our book jacket, by Dr. Dave Weldon, former congressman who says this issue must be discussed. These two mainstream physicians have served in the federal govt for many years and care deeply about children’s health and vaccine safety. They gave their names to *Vaccine Epidemic* to advance this work. We need to listen to them. They call for more science.

It is crystal clear, in the law and in state of the art human rights norms and principles, that people have the right to free and informed consent to all medical interventions and this includes vaccination. In other words, people have the right to vaccination choice. It is a hallmark of ethical medicine.

Mr. Gates, we respectfully ask that you hear us. We are not anti-vaccine. We are for vaccine safety. We are for justice for the vaccine injured. And we are for powerful, precious, human rights-affirming vaccination choice.

I’d like to introduce my colleague, Mary Holland. She is a co-editor and contributing author of *Vaccine Epidemic*. Mary is a legal analyst and research scholar. And she is a leader in the Coalition for Vaccine Safety. Mary will speak about the Supreme Court’s *Bruesewitz* decision handed down earlier this week, and she will read statements from the Bruesewitz, Cedillo, and Hazlehurst families.