

Julie Ponesse Reveals Hollowness of Official Intellectual Class

by Janice Fiamengo



Reaction to ethics professor Julie Ponesse's short videos explaining her refusal to accept the COVID-19 injections mandated by her employer, Western University's Huron University College in Ontario, could have been predicted.

On one side, she has been lauded as a hero for standing up against what many now-sidelined individuals regard as an act of inhumane coercion. On the other (official) side, she has been sneered at as a fool, her various arguments deemed unworthy of respectful response. Whatever else it has done, her public stand has highlighted the vast chasm between those who raise human rights objections to vaccine mandates and our government-supported and complicit intellectual elite.

In two videos, "[Can Vaccines Be Imposed On Us?](#)" the latter prepared in conjunction with a dissident doctors' network called the Canadian COVID Care Alliance, Ponesse appealed to the fundamental right of each individual to make unforced decisions about medical treatments. In support of her position, she cited the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms ([Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights](#), which declares inviolable the principle of "informed consent" regarding all medical policies. And she emphasized the [Twitter thread](#) explaining his ethical support for vaccine mandates based on the proven efficacy of the vaccines, their low risk, and the threat posed by the virus to the vulnerable, but his comments regarding compulsion in a mandate are strikingly crude. "Mandates do *constrain* choices," he [explaining](#) that

threat of immediate job loss does not make a choice less free, but this is an assertion that would convince no one actually facing the threat: "That vaccines may be required to work in certain settings doesn't render the consent to be vaccinated involuntary. It's still your voluntary choice whether to be vaccinated. Employers just don't have to employ you if you aren't." Even squinting one's eyes very hard, it's impossible to see how forcing someone to choose between taking an injection and putting food on the table leaves that person with a free choice. For Smith, it seems, if they're not actually forcing the needle into your arm, you're fine.

Along with other members of the pro-vaccine lobby, Smith offers almost nothing in defense of vaccine mandates outside of government talking points about the lethal danger of the virus and the proven safety of the vaccines. Both points have been vigorously contested by dissident immunologists and virologists, who have placed their reputations and in many cases their careers in jeopardy to assert COVID's very [especially on young men](#), the attendant problem of [inability to stop virus spread](#). The censorship, personal attacks, and firings they have faced are themselves powerful proof of the coercion and lack of transparency in authorities' handling of this crisis.

But arguments about whether and how well the vaccines work are, to some extent, irrelevant. Ponesse has raised long-recognized and universally acknowledged ethical objections to coerced medical treatments. These cry out for serious debate, and one would expect that academics, who are supposed to stand apart from government, the medical establishment, and indeed society itself, would be eager to ask the hard questions and engage in non-dogmatic discussion of all points of view. It's a measure of the hollowness of academia in Canada today that so little such discussion is either allowed or, it seems, desired.

First published in the