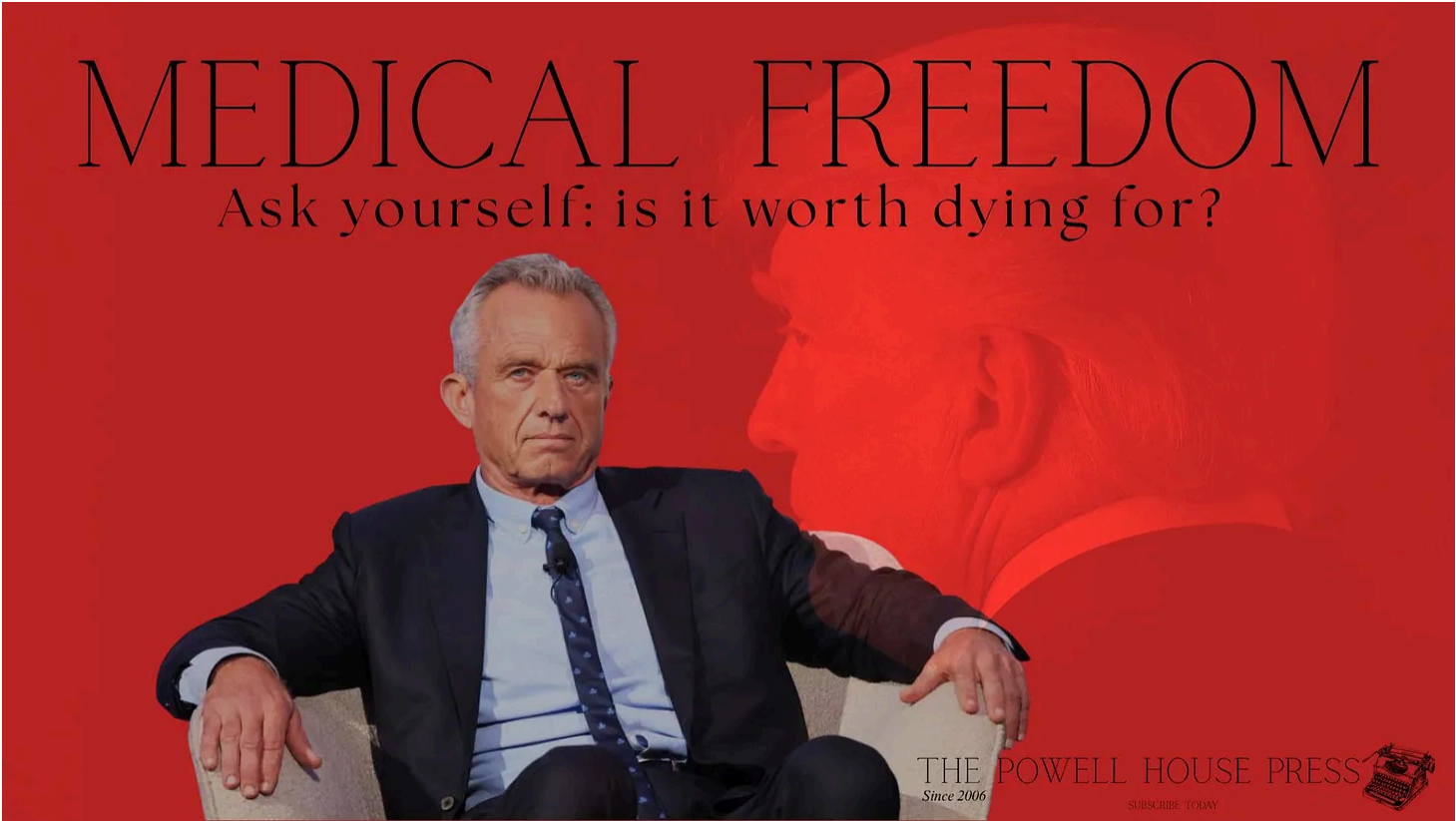
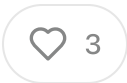


# The Deadly Cost of Health "Freedom."

In this case freedom is not just a word when there is nothing left to lose - there is a lot to lose.



JOSHUA POWELL  
DEC 15, 2025 • PAID



Raw milk is not a “superfood.” It is milk that contains, as it has for millennia, the potential for salmonella, listeria, E. coli, and campylobacter—pathogens that pasteurization, that unglamorous Victorian-era innovation, eliminates with boring reliability. Before Louis Pasteur’s breakthrough, milk was one of the leading vectors for tuberculosis. The infant mortality statistics of the 1890s are not a lifestyle to which we should aspire, however fetchingly they might be photographed for Instagram.

But here we are, in an America where the Secretary of Health and Human Services—a man whose department oversees the CDC, FDA, and NIH—has recruited Mark McAfee, proprietor of a California raw milk operation with a résumé of recalls and outbreaks, to draft federal certification standards.

The timing is flawless in its recklessness. H5N1 avian influenza is currently rampaging through American dairy herds. The virus concentrates in infected udders at levels virologists describe with something approaching disbelief. Studies show the pathogen survives in refrigerated raw milk for five to eight weeks and remains viable throughout the cheese-making process. When researchers fed contaminated raw milk to mice, every single animal showed signs of illness within a day.

This is a pandemic-capable virus auditioning for its closeup, and Bobby Kennedy wants to remove the one barrier—pasteurization—that reliably eliminates it from the

milk supply. Scientists warn that expanded raw milk consumption during an H5N1 outbreak could provide the virus additional opportunities to adapt to mammalian hosts, potentially evolving the capacity for efficient human-to-human transmission. We are, in essence, being asked to gamble with pandemic odds so that wellness influencers can peddle “living enzymes” to credulous millennials at farmers’ markets.

What makes Kennedy’s crusade particularly maddening is its appropriation of legitimate grievances. Americans should be concerned about ultra-processed foods. The metabolic health crisis is real. The cozy relationships between regulatory agencies and the industries they oversee do merit scrutiny. But Kennedy, with the unerring instinct of the conspiratorial mind, has seized upon these valid concerns and welded them to a portfolio of dangerous nonsense. It is the gift of the decade: wrap your quackery in the language of rebellion and watch the checks roll in from people who correctly sense that something is wrong with American food but lack the scientific literacy to distinguish between corrupt systems and settled science.



Measles rash on a child. Courtesy of New York City Health and Hospitals

The damage is already being done. When the Secretary of Health and Human Services declares that the FDA has been waging a “war on public health” by enforcing pasteurization standards, he grants permission. He legitimizes. He tells every state legislator considering a raw milk bill that the federal government is on their side.

But raw milk is not a one-off. It is a single volume in an encyclopedic work of dangerous policy.

As of this week, the United States has recorded more than 1,900 confirmed cases of measles in 2025—the highest number in over three decades—and more than 25,000 cases of whooping cough, the second consecutive year of surging pertussis infections. The measles death toll stands at three, including two children in West Texas. Whooping cough has claimed at least ten lives this year, six of them infants under one

year old. And in January, barring some miraculous interruption of transmission chains, America will lose its measles elimination status—a public health achievement that took decades to secure and months for Kennedy to squander.

These are not exotic diseases imported from distant lands. These are old American killers, vanquished by vaccines, now invited back through the front door.

Before the whooping cough vaccine became widely available in 1948, the United States recorded an estimated 200,000 cases annually. Up to 9,000 children died every year—tiny bodies wracked by coughing spasms so severe they broke ribs, turned blue from oxygen deprivation, and sometimes simply stopped breathing. The vaccine changed everything. Cases plummeted by more than ninety percent.

And now it is back. Cases skyrocketed from 7,000 in 2023 to 35,400 in 2024. Texas alone has logged more than 3,500 cases so far in 2025. Louisiana has already approached its entire 2024 case count in just the first months of this year—and two infants are dead.

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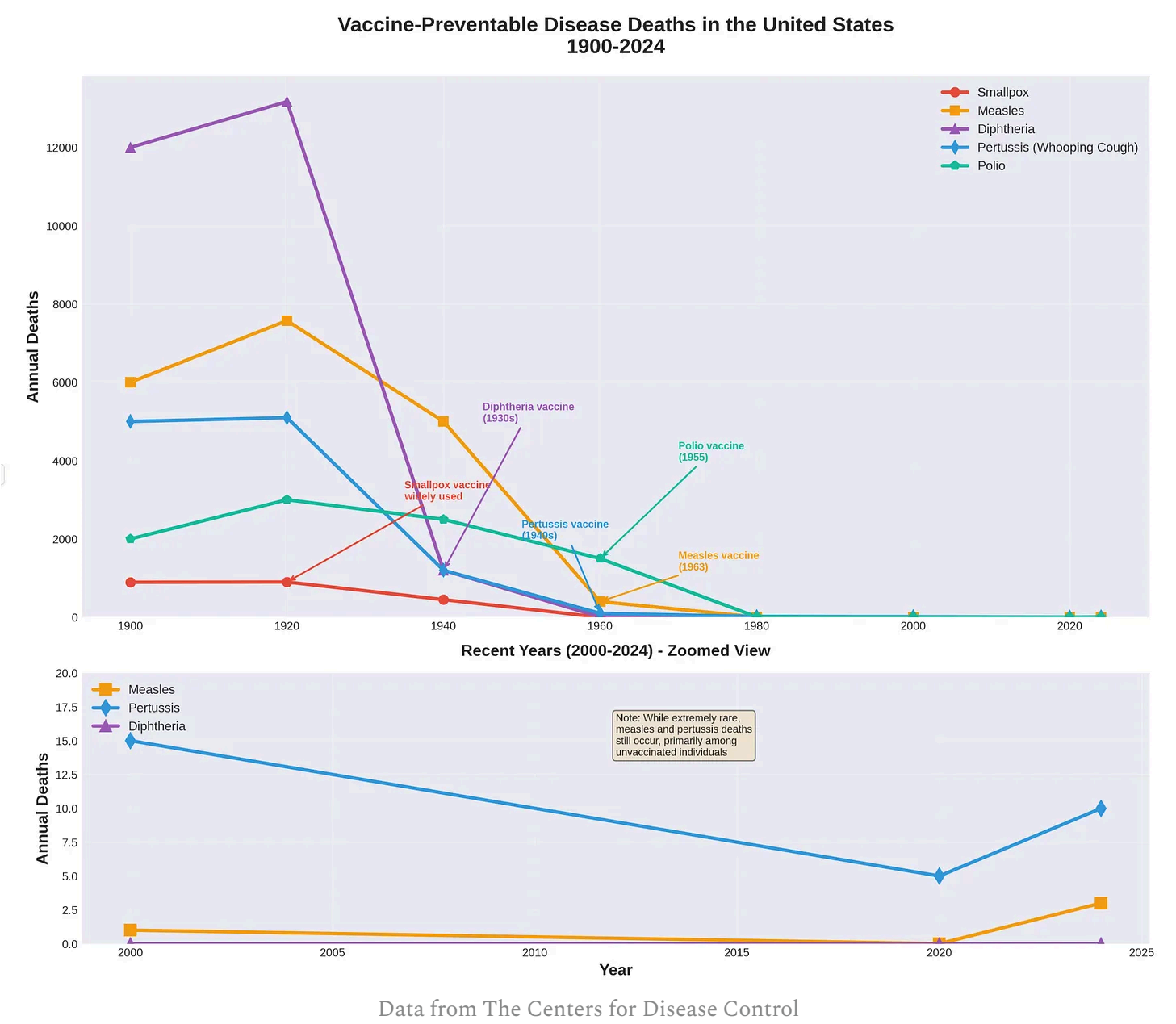


The pattern is identical with measles. The outbreak that began in Gaines County, Texas, in January has sickened roughly eight hundred people in that region alone, killing a six-year-old girl who spent three weeks on a ventilator before succumbing to pneumonia, and an eight-year-old whose funeral was held at a Mennonite church in Seminole. The virus has since spread to New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arizona, Utah, and South Carolina.

Ninety-two percent of this year's measles patients were unvaccinated or had unknown vaccination status. Declining vaccine coverage—from ninety-five percent of kindergartners before the pandemic to just 92.1 percent today for DTaP—has opened the door to resurgence. These are not failures of the vaccines. These are failures of will, of memory, of leadership.

Vaccine hesitancy is not confined to Mennonite communities. In the public schools of Gaines County, more than seventeen percent of children have “conscientious exemptions” from vaccination requirements. In St. Louis, MMR coverage among kindergartners has plummeted from ninety percent in 2010 to seventy-four percent today. Nationally, the percentage of kindergartners with a vaccine exemption has risen to an all-time high of 3.6 percent, representing some 138,000 children whose parents have decided that a century of immunology is less trustworthy than their gut feelings.

The biology of these diseases is unforgiving. Measles is the most contagious virus known to humanity; one infected person can transmit it to twelve to eighteen others in an unvaccinated population. When coverage drops below ninety-five percent, measles finds purchase.



**Herd Immunity - *Really?***

As preventable diseases increase, Kennedy and his appointees promote quack theories about superfoods, vitamin cures, and herd immunity through natural infection. There is nothing to support their claims about superfoods and vitamin therapies. And what people don’t understand about herd immunity is the brutal arithmetic it requires when achieved through infection rather than vaccination.

Herd immunity occurs when enough people in a population become immune to an infectious disease—either through vaccination or previous infection—that the pathogen can no longer spread easily from person to person. When most people are immune, they act as a barrier, breaking chains of transmission and protecting vulnerable individuals who cannot be vaccinated: newborns, pregnant women, the immunocompromised.

But here’s the critical detail that Kennedy and the “Make America Healthy Again” movement seem unwilling to discuss: the threshold required varies dramatically by

disease, and so does the human cost of reaching it without vaccines.

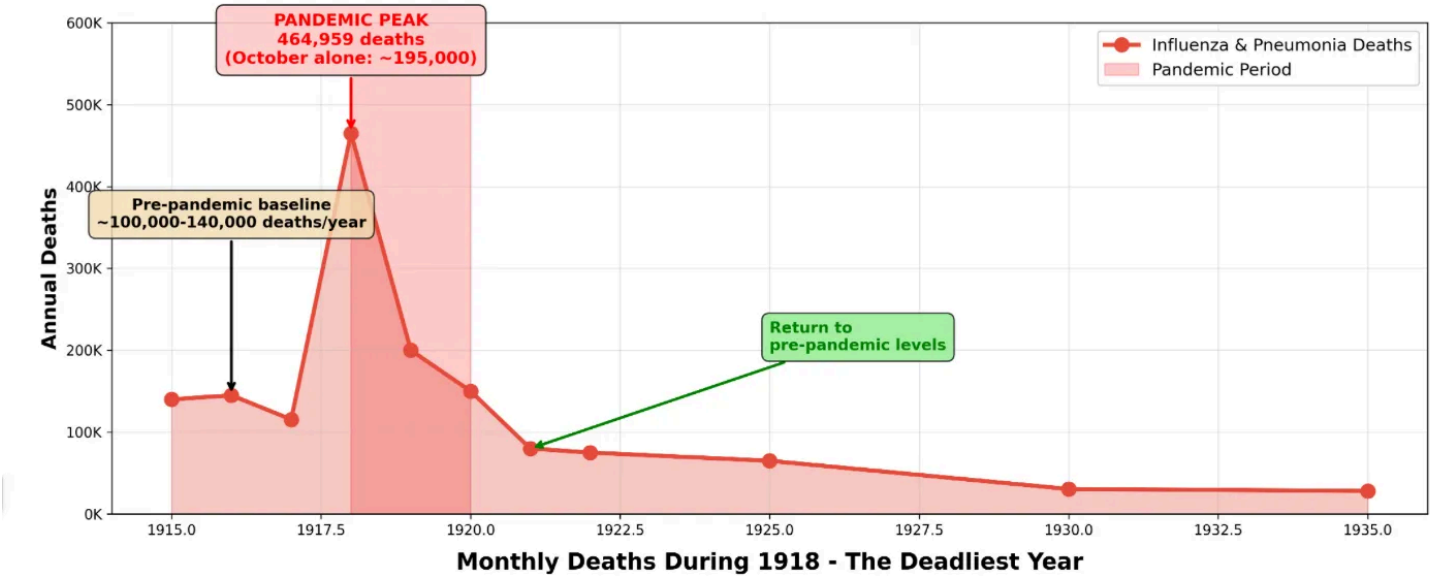
For measles, you need roughly ninety-five percent immunity—because one infected person can transmit the virus to twelve to eighteen others in an unvaccinated population. For polio, the threshold is eighty to eighty-five percent. For whooping cough, ninety-three to ninety-five percent. These percentages represent the firebreak that stops an outbreak in its tracks.

There are two pathways to achieve this protection. Vaccination provides immunity safely, without illness, protecting both individuals and communities. Natural infection provides immunity too—but only to those who survive it. And that survival rate carries a price measured in morgues.

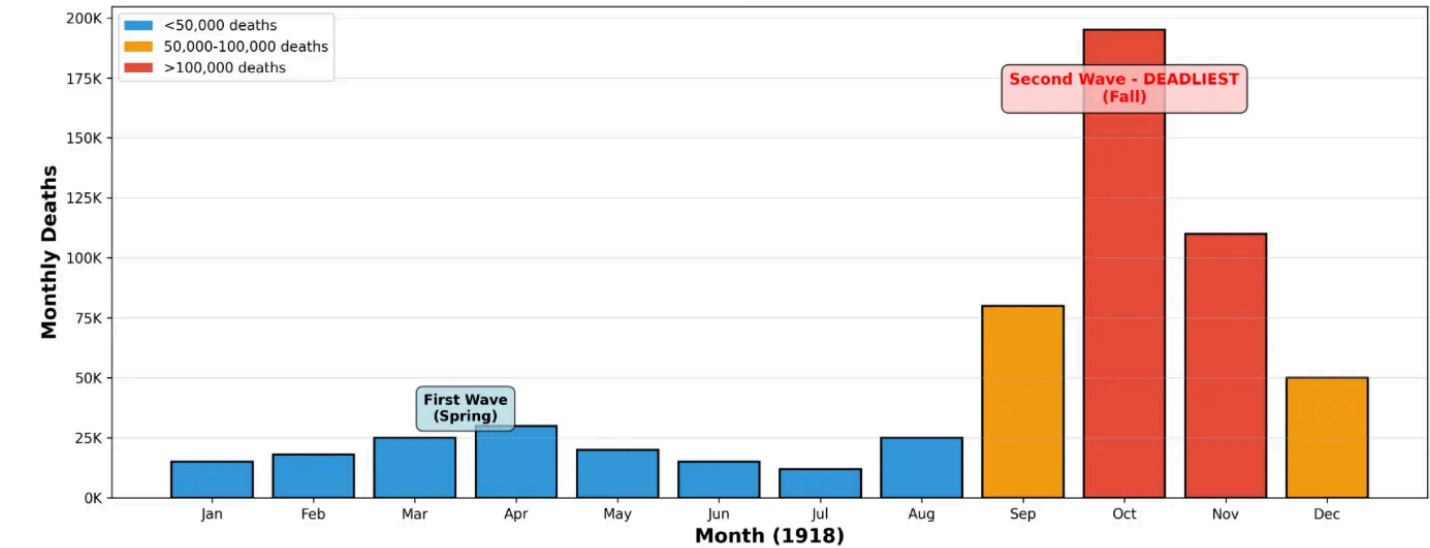
Consider the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1919. There was no vaccine. The virus infected approximately 500 million people—one-third of the world's population. The death toll is still debated by historians and epidemiologists, but most estimates place it at 50 million people worldwide, with some scholars suggesting it may have reached 100 million. In the United States alone, 675,000 died—more than all American combat deaths in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam combined.

The pandemic ended when it ran out of susceptible hosts. Herd immunity was achieved—but only after the virus had killed between three and six percent of the entire global population. The “herd” that remained had immunity. The rest were culled.

Spanish Flu Pandemic Deaths in the United States  
1915-1935



Monthly Deaths During 1918 - The Deadliest Year



That’s the word Kennedy never uses when he promotes “natural immunity”: culling. Death. The removal of the vulnerable from the population. It’s what happens when you achieve herd immunity through infection rather than vaccination. It’s the default setting of nature, red in tooth and claw—the mechanism by which diseases have always regulated populations before modern medicine intervened.

This is what Kennedy is proposing, whether he understands it or not. When you undermine vaccination rates, when you dismiss outbreaks as “not unusual,” when you frame immunization as a personal choice rather than a community obligation, you are voting for the old system. You are inviting culling back to the table.





*In the video above, RFK Jr. being interviewed on the Lex Fridman's podcast explains that he uses testosterone, but not steroids or anabolic steroids. Anyone who took 9th grade biology knows that testosterone is both an anabolic and an androgenic steroid. Testosterone is not proven to provide anti-aging benefits. It shows his hypocrisy - and more over it shows just how illiterate he is in the healthcare space.*

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The cruelty of this position becomes vivid when you consider whooping cough. The most vulnerable victims are infants under three months old who cannot yet be vaccinated. They depend entirely on the immunity of those around them—their parents, siblings, caregivers. When adults decline vaccination, when pregnant women skip the Tdap shot that would pass protective antibodies to their babies, they are not exercising freedom. They are making a choice with someone else's life. And that someone cannot yet speak, cannot consent, cannot choose.

Before the whooping cough vaccine became widely available in 1948, the United States recorded 200,000 cases annually. Up to 9,000 children died every year—tiny bodies wracked by coughing spasms so severe they broke ribs, gasping for air that wouldn't come, sometimes simply stopping breathing. That was natural herd immunity at work. That was the cull.

The vaccine changed everything. Cases plummeted by more than ninety percent. The culling stopped.

And now Kennedy wants to bring it back—not through honest argument, but through the language of freedom and choice, through the mythology of superfoods and natural immunity, through the dismantling of the very systems that protect the vulnerable.

This is the fundamental obscenity of the anti-vaccine movement: it feeds on its own success. Parents who have never watched a child die of measles, never heard the whooping gasps of a pertussis-stricken infant, have the luxury of treating vaccination as optional. They have been protected so thoroughly by the sacrifices of previous generations—by the millions who died before vaccines existed—that they cannot imagine what they are risking.

They think they are choosing freedom. They are choosing culling.

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## Coming this Wednesday, December 17, 2025




There's a locked room in the chancery of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany containing forty years of files documenting which priests violated which children, when, and how often. Bishop Howard J. Hubbard kept the key for four decades—and when he finally died, having just married a woman in what can only be described as his final ecclesiastical middle finger to Rome, that room became the Rosetta Stone for understanding how an entire regional Catholic establishment learned to operate: document internally, lie externally, and when the bill comes due, file for bankruptcy and blame the lawyers.

Because here's what nobody wants to say out loud at Wolfert's Roost Country Club or over drinks at 677 Prime: the sexual abuse scandal wasn't an aberration. It was a template. The same institutional muscle memory that allowed bishops to reassign pedophile priests while filing false reports also allowed them to loot a hospital pension fund (jury verdict: \$54.2 million), shutter a 103-year-old college with seven months' notice leaving 2,600 students stranded, and run a healthcare network that placed 955 liens on patients' homes over medical debts averaging \$1,955 while pocketing \$12 million meant to cover indigent care from NY State. Different institutions, same DNA.



And at the center of it all are the men in power. The bishops, priests, and the Catholic leadership—people who, had they been running Enron instead of a diocese, would be in federal prison.

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