

# Mask Misinformation and the Failure of the Elites | Vanity Fair

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This essay will offer grimness, as if that were avoidable, but end with optimism—because why not? The last thing we need is to wallow in complaint. Still, we do need a reckoning. The United States will pass the coronavirus test, but only after failing it. Lots of the failures will be due to incompetence, which people will forgive. Others will be due to lies, which people will not. During a crucial stretch starting in early March, **Donald Trump**, backed by an army of right-wing media hacks, was chief dissembler, downplaying the gravity of what we faced. But people are at least prepared for dishonesty from Trump. Less expected were all the experts and organizations that offered bad guidance as well, especially in February, when many of our self-appointed sages issued a parade of false assurances and specious arguments. As a rule, commission of such sins, if in sync with prevailing opinion, poses no threat to your status. But people are getting tired of that rule.

[...]

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