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Doctor Killed by Coronavirus Will Long be Revered for Trying to Protect Others

By Lillian M. Hernandez Caraballo
UCF Forum columnist
Wednesday, February 12, 2020

We need more people like Dr. Li Wenliang, who put his life in jeopardy. His story has touched people around the world, both in sorrow and outrage.



(Photo by CDC at Pexels)

It was like something out of a movie: A doctor tries to warn the world about a disease spreading around the globe – but he was not heard.

In this real-life case, Chinese authorities accused this doctor of spreading rumors and panic about the deadly coronavirus, and he was forced to sign a document for “making false comments.” But he valiantly continued his work at a hospital where, shortly after, he contracted the virus. As China started feeling the physical, emotional and economic effects of the disease, the doctor was proven right.

Dr. Li Wenliang died Feb. 7 at the age of 34. To many, he died a hero. We need more people in this world who are willing to stand up and help others.

The heartbreaking outcome of the infection takes on a cruel shape under the light of this story. Had Chinese authorities reacted differently, the life of the man who was trying to save others could have been spared. It turns a time of grieving into a time of fury, as we learn that the scope of this crisis was made greater over a purposeful cover-up.

Pick whichever cliché you want – everything happens for a reason; every cloud has a silver lining; it is always darkest before dawn – but something else emerges from this story.

He stood on the side of truth and did the right thing as long as he could.

Obviously, I didn't know the doctor, so any assumptions I make on his character are speculative. But from documented accounts, the doctor tried to spread information to educate people on the truths about the virus, even against the orders of the government. He stood on the side of truth and did the right thing as long as he could. He even went back to work at the hospital, knowing the risks involved.

Maybe he didn't have a choice, maybe he did. I don't know. But I do know he was married with a child and another on the way. He had reasons to stay home and say, “Forget it, I tried.”

I wonder what I would have done in his position, and I immediately feel gratitude for heroes like him.

This has touched people all around the world, people who have been showing solidarity inspired by the doctor. The solidarity is not just in the sorrow, however, but also in the outrage. People all over China became enraged after learning that authorities knew about the extent of the virus before publically acknowledging it. Many are protesting against censorship and for freedom of speech. What may have been a simple act of honor for Li turned into an act of sacrifice, a martyr to many, and it may have become a turning point for a necessary big change in China. In his tragedy, in his name, the people of China are demanding to expand freedom of speech. Li's actions may have resulted in a lot more consequences than what was being originally perceived.

[A video posted to social media](#) the night of his death recorded how the screams of anger from the people in the city of Wuhan can be heard. Even corralled to their homes on lockdown, their streets were loud as they yelled out their apartment windows, “Dr. Li Wenliang!”

It has been said that everybody dies twice: once when your physical body dies, and then again, the last time someone utters your name.

In the people's fight that must continue, Li long will be remembered with pain and anger – and respect. He is being cried out as a symbol and lives in an echo of his name.

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