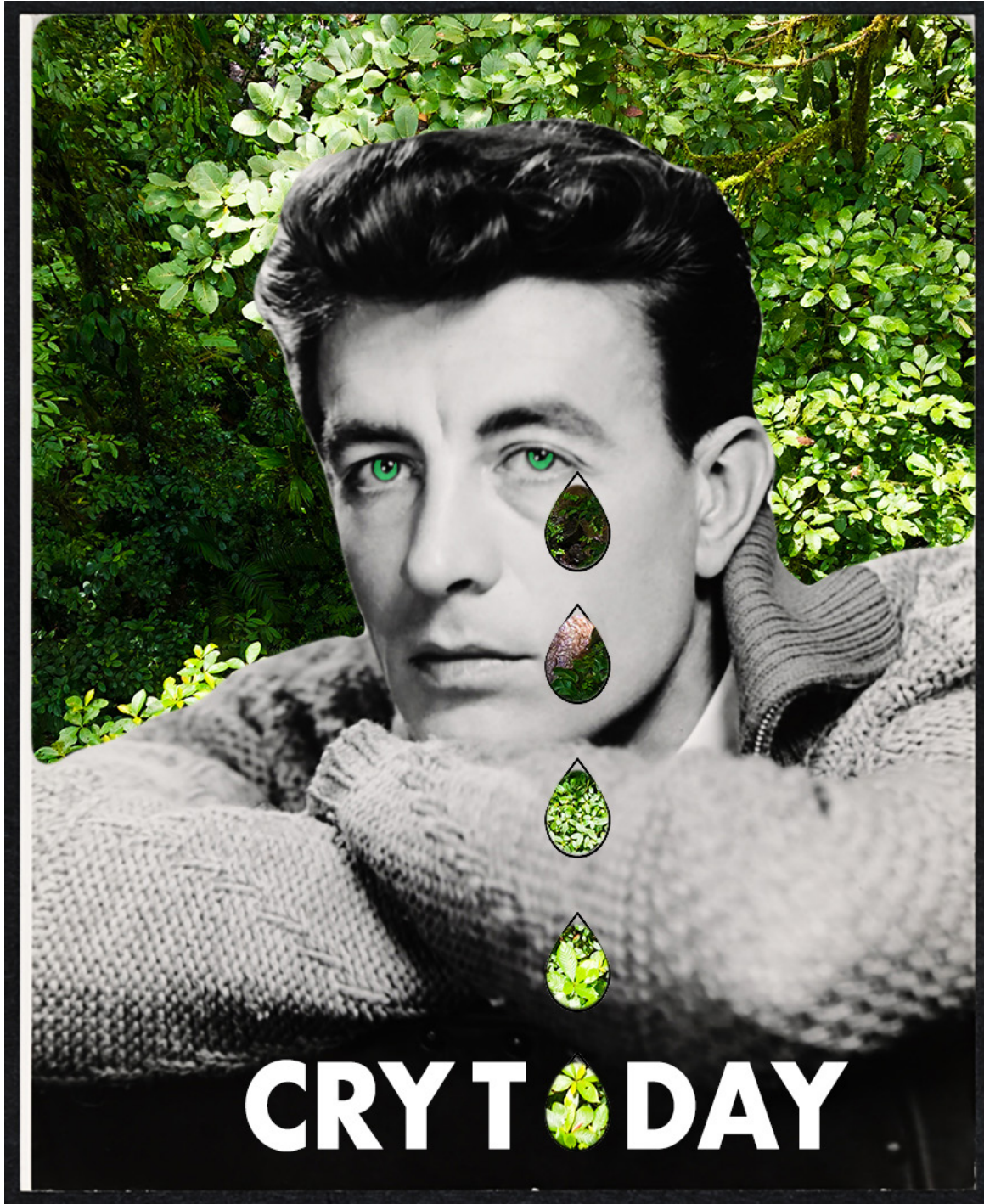


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**A**UTISM CAUSING VACCINES ARE FAKE NEWS:  
A NEED FOR FEDERAL VACCINATION LAWS KATHLEEN PATERSON

Every state mandates that children get immunized for measles, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and polio before enrolling in kindergarten. However, all 50 states allow medical exemptions, 47 states allow religious exemptions, and 17 states allow philosophical exemptions. These exemptions, permitted on the basis of our nation's First Amendment, give parents the choice to not vaccinate their children, which leads to serious and dangerous consequences. For instance, the 2015 Disneyland measles outbreak was linked to an unvaccinated child visiting the crowded park.

Vaccine rates in the United States have been in steady decline since a publication in the 1998 *Lancet*, which suggested that the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine caused autism in previously healthy children. Although the conclusions from the "study" were almost immediately refuted and then retracted by the journal in 2004, 17 states now have fewer than 90% of children vaccinated for measles. In the age of "fake news media," parents are now emboldened to ignore serious information published by credible news sources and thus choose to opt out of preventive medicine. For instance, in 2012 then citizen Donald Trump tweeted, "Autism rates through the roof--why doesn't the Obama administration do something about doctor-inflicted autism" and then again in 2014 tweeted "Autism WAY UP - I believe in vaccinations but not massive, all at once, shots. Too much for small child to handle. Govt. should stop NOW!"

The most serious risks of vaccines, namely severe allergic reactions, are far more rare than the diseases they protect against. It is in society's best interest that this individual choice be subverted for public good and Federal Laws be imposed to curtail personal and religious belief exemptions. Vaccines work by protecting individuals, but their strength really lies in the ability to protect others, specifically those who are most at risk due to age or a compromised

immune system. In upholding the duty to protect its citizens and commitment to public health, the government should intervene when parents, who are often uneducated on the topic, choose not to vaccinate their children and thus confer a serious risk to many innocent people.

Federal mandated vaccination laws would not be unprecedented in terms of the government intervening on behalf of a child's medical well being. For example, in 1989, the Massachusetts State Supreme Court ruled that Jehovah's Witnesses are allowed to reject lifesaving blood transfusions for themselves (on the basis of religious beliefs), but they may not refuse necessary transfusions for minors. The Supreme Judicial Court upheld the lower court's ruling to authorize a transfusion, stating, "We conclude that the child's best interests, and the interests of the state, outweigh the parental and religious rights."

Vaccines are perhaps the most important health intervention in history, but have sadly become a victim of their own success. They have been so effective in eliminating the spread of deadly diseases that people have become complacent with the idea of child contracting measles and instead see the unproven risk of a child developing autism as a side effect of a vaccine as a greater possibility. Vaccines are widely supported by doctors, specifically the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In early 2017, in response to a suggestion of a Federal commission on immunizations, the AAP issued a statement reiterating that vaccines are safe, effective and save lives.

One point that anti-vaccine proponents argue is that autism has become a more prevalent diagnosis in recent years. However, correlation does not prove causation, and although it is true that autism has become more prevalent, the reason is due to a broader definition of autism spectrum disorder, rather than vaccines. Additionally, critics, like President Trump, assert that vaccines should be given over a