

As the coronavirus tolls soar worldwide

Deaths from COVID-19 in New York double in three days

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The number of deaths caused by COVID-19 in New York state has doubled in the past three days, from 1,550 to more than 3,200, with more than 102,000 cases statewide. New York City alone accounts for about half of these, with 1,600 dead and 57,000 cases. The country as a whole now has, as of this writing, 277,161 cases and 7,392 deaths, including a record 32,284 new cases yesterday and 1,321 deaths.

New York is the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States and is rapidly becoming the epicenter of the pandemic worldwide. There are now just under 1.1 million confirmed cases of the disease internationally, and less than a quarter have so far recovered. An estimated 4 billion people around the world are under some form of stay-at-home order. To date, more than 56,000 men, women and children of all ages have died, placing the current average fatality rate at 5.4 percent.

Other countries with surging coronavirus cases include:

- Italy: 119,827 cases and 14,681 deaths
- Spain: 119,199 cases and 11,198 deaths
- Germany: 91,159 cases and 1,275 deaths
- France: 64,338 cases and 6,507 deaths
- Iran: 53,183 cases and 3,294 deaths
- Britain: 36,168 cases and 3,605 deaths
- Turkey: 20,921 cases and 425 deaths

This was the context in which President Donald Trump gave yet another press conference on Friday combining self-praise, bullying of the press, stonewalling and outright lies. In prepared remarks, Surgeon General Jerome Adams stated that, “We now know that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms,” and that they “can

transmit the virus to others before they show symptoms.”

What blatant falsifications! Health experts in China and the World Health Organization (WHO) warned in January that the novel coronavirus was spreading so fast because those who were contagious often did not show symptoms for up to 14 days. It is the primary reason that the WHO has for months stressed the need to “test, test, test” for the virus. The US itself recognized this fact in January when it began two-week quarantine periods for all people traveling from Wuhan, the first epicenter of the pandemic.

Trump again displayed his criminal indifference to the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people who are infected in the country, summed up in his response to a question about appeals from states and municipalities for desperately needed medical equipment. “We’re not a shipping clerk,” he snapped.

At the same time, he casually mentioned that the various oil executives with whom he had met earlier in the day, multimillionaires all, “were all given the [coronavirus] test before they came into the room.” Trump himself “had the test yesterday.” He seemed oblivious to the reality of millions of ordinary Americans, including those with symptoms, being denied testing, while the wealthy and well-connected have no problem getting access to the test.

He once again absolved himself of any responsibility for the dearth of masks, protective gear, ventilators and other critical medical supplies, blaming the Obama administration. After Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, a former pharmaceutical executive and lobbyist, asserted, falsely, “For fifteen years now, this country has had a massive effort at the

federal, state and local level of preparedness for a pandemic,” Trump gave no indication why lifesaving equipment needed to fight a pandemic was not available. He silenced a reporter by stating, “You should speak to the previous administration, because the shelves were empty.”

Trump blamed New York for its lack of ventilators, declaring, “They should’ve had more ventilators at the time.” Despite warnings from Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio that they will be unable to care for new critical patients next week, Trump said, “We happen to think that [Cuomo] is well-served with ventilators.”

In the meantime, Trump’s much ballyhooed deployment of field and naval hospitals to New York City has proven to be a cruel deception. The hospital ship Comfort, which has been docked in the city’s harbor for a week, has only taken on a mere 20 out of a potential 1,000 patients.

Deborah Birx, the Coronavirus Task Force response coordinator, continued the whitewashing efforts by declaring that only “when we get through this” could there be any “questions about could we have done some piece of this better.”

This is a bipartisan position. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced Thursday that she was establishing a bipartisan committee to monitor the federal response to the COVID-19 crisis. But she stressed that its mandate would be to oversee the “here and now” and not be “retrospective,” i.e., that the Democrats would oppose any serious investigation into the criminally negligent response of the government to the virus.

No mention was made by any member of the political establishment or media of the workers who are dying after being forced to stay on the job without adequate protective equipment. Five workers at Ford and eight at Fiat Chrysler have so far died after being exposed to the virus at work. Instacart, Amazon and Whole Foods workers have walked out to demand that the corporations—the latter two owned by multibillionaire Jeff Bezos—ensure that their employees are protected from the ravages of the disease.

While New York is the most seriously hit, many other regions in the country are facing a similarly catastrophic situation. New Jersey, Michigan, California, Massachusetts, Louisiana and Florida all have at least 10,000 cases and at least 170 deaths.

Cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Seattle and New Orleans are particularly inundated. Their health care systems are likely a week behind the breakdown taking place in New York City.

One of the many reasons these and other areas are unable to cope with the crisis is the pervasive and massive price gouging on basic medical supplies. Gloves are often four times the regular price, while masks are marked up as much as 15 times. Hospitals in upstate New York owned by Arnot Health report that Blank Industries has tried to force them to buy N95 respirator masks for \$4.92 each, and only if they order one million at a time. Such large orders of masks before the pandemic would have cost less than \$50,000.

Such chaos and criminality are hallmarks of capitalism, which puts profit before human life.

With each passing day, it becomes ever clearer that the American ruling class has no intention of taking any measures that will prevent the pandemic from claiming hundreds of thousands and potentially millions of lives. Rather, all of the efforts of the entire political establishment and both corporate-controlled parties are devoted to protecting and even increasing the wealth of the financial oligarchy, as seen in the \$6 trillion corporate bailout package passed last week with virtually unanimous support from both Democrats and Republicans—including Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

Meanwhile, the jobs of millions of workers are being wiped out in what is rapidly developing into the deepest economic slump since the Great Depression.

The vital social resources needed to contain this pandemic and care for those infected must be seized by the working class from the capitalist owners and transformed into public utilities under the democratic control of the working people, as part of a centrally planned socialist economy based on the satisfaction of social needs, not private profit.



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