

Las Vegas mayor offers up 2.3 million residents as “control group” by reopening during the pandemic

Jacob Crosse
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In a pair of viral national television interviews that sparked shock and outrage among millions last week, Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman, speaking for billionaire casino magnates and luxury hotel executives, demanded a preemptive reopening of the city and the return of hundreds of thousands of international travelers without any regard for public health or the objective reality of the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

In comments first made on MSNBC, and then repeated the following day on CNN, Goodman spelled out her dystopian nightmare of the “American Dream,” advocating a prompt reopening of the economy, including restaurants, convention centers, hotels and casinos without any scientifically informed testing and tracing plan.

Her call to reopen did not include any plan or process which businesses would need to implement before reopening. Instead, the mayor proposed “leaving it up” to the casino and hotel executives to determine what are necessary public safety measures needed to prevent the further spread of the deadliest pandemic since the 1918 Spanish Flu which has already infected at least 3,443 residents of Las Vegas and surrounding Clark County and killed 168.

Goodman is purposefully ignoring or obfuscating the fact that several businesses, including MGM Resorts, were forced to begin shutting down operations before Governor Steve Sisolak issued his belated shutdown order. Businesses began to close during the second week of March due to the rampant spread of the contagion among their workforce and guests, which could not be contained. Given the nature of large crowds walking in and out of massive casino floors

which pump recirculated air throughout the facility, similar to cruise ships, casinos and resorts provide an ideal environment for future outbreaks.

This didn’t deter Goodman from arguing that the government should rescind the shutdown orders, even as the national death toll exceeds 55,000, telling CNN’s Anderson Cooper, “Let the businesses open and competition will destroy that business if, in fact, they become evident that they have disease they’re closed down. It’s that simple.”

In both interviews, Goodman deliberately propagated a fact-free conspiracy theory postulating that everyone within the southern Nevada region was “a carrier” of the coronavirus and that “100 percent of the population was asymptomatic.”

This is demonstrably false, as of April 26 the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services reported 46,965 tests had been conducted on 38,184 people. Of those tests, less than 1 percent of the entire population of Nevada, nearly 34,000 were negative, but the number of positive cases continues to rise by approximately 200 every day. Without mass testing for the virus or antibodies it would be impossible to state that everyone is already infected with the virus or that they are a “carrier.”

In each nationally televised interview, first a roughly nine-minute segment on MSNBC with Katy Tur and then an extended 30 minute interview on CNN with Cooper, Goodman downplayed the lethality of the virus and offered the residents of Las Vegas and the surrounding area, more than 2.3 million people, as lab rats in a criminal experiment that would result in mass death.

Goodman first brought up the demand for a “control

group” with Tur stating, “Has there been a control group? When you are doing statistics, control groups are absolutely so paramount, so everything is going to be looked at...”

Goodman’s tortured grasp of scientific experiments and controlling for potential variables in the testing of new medications has nothing to do with protecting public health and everything to do with reopening the casinos and hotels as quickly as possible to resume the exploitation of tens of thousands of workers and to extract tourist dollars.

The mayor’s deranged comments, which could have easily been made by President Donald Trump—who recently suggested injecting deadly disinfectants to treat the virus—or any number of state governors, represent the plans and demands of a decaying capitalist order whose chief concern is the resumption of profit-making, public health be damned.

Goodman’s call to reopen the city comes at a time when health care workers across the state have filed 26 Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) complaints, normally as many as filed in an entire year. Their concerns included, “being forced to reuse protective equipment meant for a single use,” as well as “being exposed to patients with coronavirus symptoms but we are never informed if the patients tested positive for the virus.” Complaints also note that health care workers who were not informed that they were dealing with COVID-19 patients went on to contract the disease.

Service Employees International Union Local 1107 submitted the complaints to OSHA on behalf of its members, who have been forced to continue to work in these dangerous conditions. SEIU has yet to call for a strike and is instead appealing to the toothless government safety organization in an attempt to quell rising anger among health care workers as the virus spreads.

OSHA has yet to follow up in person on any of the complaints. The agency has refused to conduct any on-site inspections, instead it is “resolving the matters through written correspondence” in order to, allegedly, protect the health and safety of the agency’s 14 inspectors in Nevada.

The Southern Nevada Health District estimated that as of April 16 more than 130 health care workers in Las Vegas and surrounding Clark County had contracted

the coronavirus. County officials stress that this is an undercount as medical investigators have been unable to survey more than 3,000 people within the region who have so far been infected by the disease.

The fact that hundreds are still contracting the disease every day in Nevada has not slowed down plans by politicians, casinos and resorts to begin the process of reopening. A spokesperson with Treasure Island, which is owned by billionaire Phil Ruffin, a personal friend of President Trump and co-owner of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, stated to the *Las Vegas Journal-Review* that they plan to re-open as of May 15. “As of right now, that is the plan.”

The announcement of the pending reopening of Treasure Island follows an op-ed published by Matt Maddox, the CEO of Wynn Resorts in Las Vegas, on April 19 in which he called for a “mid-May” reopening of major casinos and resorts. Maddox acknowledged that incrementally reopening the casinos and hotels could, “jeopardize[s] our health care system capacity. However, the only way to cross this river is one stone at a time, and we need to put our feet in the water before it is too late.”

As of Sunday, Wynn Las Vegas is accepting reservations for the Memorial Day weekend, with bookings available starting May 22. A spokesman noted that the holiday is especially popular among tourists from neighboring California and that “protective guest and employee measures” would be in place in time to welcome tourists back to the hotel.

So, while Goodman’s comments are, like Trump’s calls to inject disinfectants, insane, there is a class logic to the madness. She is expressing the global mantra of the capitalist ruling class demand for the population to return to work in order to save their stock portfolios before it is “too late” for them.



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