

Sixteen-year-old Wisconsin high school student dies of COVID-19

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On November 25, the day before Thanksgiving, Isai Morocho, a 16-year-old junior at Madison East High School in Madison, Wisconsin, died suddenly from complications due to COVID-19.

Morocho was described by the East High principal Brendan Kearney as “an excellent student who enjoyed theatre and had talked of becoming a chef and owning his own business” and “a caring friend and family member with a ready smile and great sense of humor.”

In a heartbreaking interview with *Madison365*, Isai’s father, Milton Morocho, described his son as “young and strong... very healthy and strong.” He explained that his son’s death from the disease was totally unexpected. Milton Morocho, through tears, urged others not to be careless and think their loved ones are safe because of age or health.

After coming down with nausea and diarrhea last month, Isai was brought to a clinic where he tested negative for COVID-19. Doctors originally dismissed the idea that it could be the novel coronavirus, as he was not showing the typical symptoms, and sent him home with the diagnosis of what they suspected was a stomach bug.

After a few days of consistent illness, his parents took him back to the clinic, but because he had already tested negative before, doctors did not test him for again for coronavirus. Isai’s family was worried by his inability to keep even water down, but were reassured by the doctors who claimed his heart and lungs were working just fine, so it was highly unlikely that his illness was COVID-19.

Although Milton Morocho revealed that he feared Isai may have COVID-19, he thought it was unlikely for someone of his age to be gravely ill from it. Furthermore, Isai had no trouble breathing, and he did not display any of the most common symptoms of

COVID-19. In the toxicology report the family received after Isai’s death, they learned he had indeed died of a COVID-19 related pneumonia.

Milton Morocho told reporters that he is not sure where his son may have contracted the disease. Even though Isai’s school was not meeting in person, Milton Morocho, his wife and their other son all work, allowing for endless possible encounters with the virus. Milton Morocho urged other students in the Madison Metropolitan School District to take precautions, and not let their guard down because they think their age may protect them.

The spokesman for the Madison Metropolitan School District, Timothy Lemonds, wrote in an email to *Madison365* that “...In the days ahead, MMSD will be focused on providing our students, families and staff the support needed in order to help them process this tremendous loss.”

The seriousness of the explosion of COVID-19 infections in Wisconsin, and all across the country, has been dismissed by the ruling class and the political establishment, which has pushed to reopen schools as the pandemic surges, claiming that children are unaffected by the virus.

Wisconsin has seen a total of 3,504 COVID-19 deaths and has had a consistent testing positivity rate of over 20 percent since October 11. As of Monday, a seven-day average of 47 people were dying every day in the state and the total number of confirmed cases had surpassed 410,000.

In September, after a significant spike in cases in the state, 276 teachers in the Kenosha Unified School District took action through a sickout and forced a brief move to online learning. This sickout was organized independently of the unions, specifically the Kenosha Education Association (KEA).

Isai Morocho's premature death is a tragedy. He is one of 428 people aged 15-24 who have died from COVID-19 in the US. These young people who have unnecessarily died, and the more than 1.4 million deaths worldwide, are the victims of an economic system, capitalism, which subordinates the most basic needs of the population to the drive for profit.

Working families like the Morochos, who must work and are unable to isolate themselves, are most at risk of becoming infected with the virus. Even though Isai's school was remote instruction, the continued operation of non-essential businesses means the danger of the virus spreading among households remains dramatically high, and has resulted in numerous tragedies like this one.

In this context the drive to open schools is a murderous initiative. Reopening schools is not safe and will only continue to spread the pandemic even further, causing mass infection among students, parents, teachers and staff. School districts promoting a return to in-person classes, urged on by the ruling class who need students back in school so parents can return to work, have chosen profit over the lives of their students and faculty.

Any meaningful action to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus has come, and will come, from independent working class action. The Democratic Party, the unions, the pseudo-left, and the Republican Party have all proven criminally indifferent to the lives lost and the suffering caused by the pandemic.

Young people who are angered by Isai's death and recognize the seriousness of the situation must also recognize the solution: the mass mobilization of students and the working class to shut down schools and non-essential production and guarantee income for workers and small businesses until the pandemic is brought under control. Youth and students must equip themselves with the political perspective to make this a reality. They must take up the fight against capitalism and join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.



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