

“I stand with Ms. Jones, and I call on others to stand in solidarity with Ms. Jones.”

Statements of support for COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones from across the US

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The WSWS is publishing statements of support for data scientist and COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones, whose Florida home was raided last week in response to her efforts to expose the spread of the pandemic in Florida and in K-12 schools across the United States. We urge our readers to send statements of support for Jones today.

We are also assisting educators, parents, students and the entire working class in forming rank-and-file safety committees to fight to close schools and nonessential business in order to stop the spread of the pandemic. All those who wish to get involved in the fight to close schools and provide fully-funded online learning should sign up today at wsws.org/edsafety.

In the week since her home was raided and electronics seized by Florida state police, Rebekah Jones has continued to update figures on The COVID Monitor, the most comprehensive tracker of COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools in the US. In the past week alone, the tracker has logged an additional 105,329 total cases among students and school staff, exposing the lie peddled by the unions and Democrats that there can be a “safe reopening” of schools.

On December 13, Jones issued a strong statement on Twitter, rightfully stating, “Truth arms the people against those who seek to oppress both.” Jones has fought back against the false narratives that schools are safe, with one of her greatest contributions being the continued efforts at updating The COVID Monitor.

While Republican Governor and Trump acolyte Ron DeSantis oversaw the fascistic raid on Jones’ home—during which officers pointed guns at her and her children—no section of the political establishment has defended Jones. The incoming Biden Administration has said nothing on this brutal assault on democratic rights, while *The New York Times*, the mouthpiece of the Democratic Party, has slandered Jones in an effort to discredit her work exposing the dangers of school reopenings, which the *Times* fully supports.

In opposition to the anti-democratic outlook of the Democrats and Republicans, and the cowardly silence of the pseudo-left, the

Socialist Equality Party has strongly condemned the police state measures.

In response to this clear assault on democratic rights, there has been an outpouring of support (some of which can be read here) by teachers, scientists, and other workers in defense of Jones and the rights of whistleblowers.

A worker in Florida who wished to remain anonymous commented to the WSWS, “The invasion of Rebekah Jones’ home is quite disturbing. Video taken by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement shows four armed officers, one with a sledge hammer ready to break down the door, and another pointing a gun into the front window. At no time during the video is a search warrant presented to Ms. Jones. Her interaction with the power of the state is very sobering.”

Joshua, an office worker for a parking company in Riverside, California, spoke on the attacks on Jones, saying, “The police raid on COVID-19 data analyst Rebekah Jones is an act of political repression and an attack on freedom of speech and publication of information.

“She was fired by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis for refusing to downplay the severity of the virus, so she decided to create her own COVID-19 database in order to warn the public with accurate and reliable information. It was for this reason that she was targeted for violent police-state repression.”

Joshua noted, “Rebekah Jones is a hero for doing what’s right for her community. Governor DeSantis, Circuit Judge Joshua Hawkes who signed the search warrant, and the Florida state police department must be held accountable for their corruption and misconduct. Ms. Jones and others like her must be protected from this fascist-like intimidation and harassment from Florida’s spineless governor and his thugs.

“Here in Southern California, the COVID-19 pandemic is spiraling out of control, and the Democratic leadership here has done nothing to effectively combat the virus. Just recently in my area, Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco released a statement that he will not enforce stay-at-home orders and shutdowns on the

premise that wearing masks ‘arguably doesn’t work’ and that ‘metrics used for closures are unbelievably faulty’ and ‘not representative of true numbers.’ He didn’t bother to explain himself or give any shred of evidence. Sheriff Bianco, who is an avid Trump supporter, is the same type of police officer who would have gladly raided and pointed guns at Rebekah Jones and her family for advocating the closure of schools and workplaces.”

Joshua noted the parallels between the attack against Jones and other whistleblowers, commenting, “The police raid on Rebekah Jones’ home is vile and alarming and is reminiscent of how Julian Assange and Edward Snowden were targeted for warning the public of the government’s crimes. I stand with Ms. Jones, and I call on others to stand in solidarity with Ms. Jones and to oppose the homicidal opening of schools and workplaces to stop the spread of the virus and save lives.”

Ricardo, a fifth grade teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District, stated, “It is very clear why Rebekah Jones was targeted by Trump surrogate DeSantis. She exposed Florida officials for pressuring her to manipulate data about COVID-19. Trump has been doing the same thing with the CDC which caused them to change their guidelines in order to align them with Trump’s messaging.

“The ruling class is desperate to eliminate any resistance to the drive to reopen the economy to allow corporate profits to resume and wealth inequality to continue to rise. Jones refused to manipulate data and was fired as a result. Jones is a hero!

“Ironically, she is accused of hacking Florida’s emergency messaging board to encourage folks to speak out. It’s Orwellian how nowadays heroes standing up for the people are considered enemies of the state and punished.”

Commenting on the necessary response of workers to this attack on democratic rights, Ricardo stated, “The drive to reopen schools must be resisted until it is safe to do so. We cannot trust that politicians will not lie and manipulate data to support their fraudulent claims in order to increase corporate profits. Support Rebekah Jones!

“It’s awful how the police went into her home and confiscated all her electronic devices and hard drives to collect all her contacts, who will now be threatened. It’s horrible, but actually not surprising. The WSWS has been warning about how the government is trying to suppress any real information getting out about the virus. They’re purposely suppressing information.

“Biden’s pledging to keep the schools open, especially during his first 100 days. He’s just another version of Trump, all so that the profit machine can continue to operate. Look at Biden’s cabinet picks. What is really trumping—no pun intended—the fact that they’re all diverse, is that there is no diversity of thought, no diversity in thinking. They are all like cookie-cutter warmongers and corporate people, nothing to do with working people.”

Harley, a teacher in Oakland, stated, “Educators are fighting back against politicians’ reckless, anti-science, anti-worker attempts to reopen campuses during a deadly pandemic. We can’t win this fight without people like Rebekah Jones collecting the data and telling the truth about COVID-19. We are in her debt, and we will fight to defend her from further state violence.”

Andrea, a Brooklyn teacher in New York City, drew the

connection between Jones’ work and the abysmal testing program implemented in New York City to justify the reopening of schools. This testing program was touted by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), which has been the key ally of Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio in enforcing school reopenings.

Andrea said, “workers in NYC, and the educators of the UFT were promised a robust testing and tracing program. That was part of our initial agreement when we went back to school back in September. The reality is that the test and trace organization has been inconsistent and slow, and at times nonexistent. Teachers have been waiting two, three, up to five or six days for contact tracing, knowing that they have been exposed to someone in their building and still not being told.

“There is a sense of safety concern there. And there is a general sense of danger in speaking out. You are risking your job and your reputation. You don’t want to call out your school or speak on what you confront.

“So I applaud Rebekah and what she is doing, and what she continues to do, because she puts people’s health and safety above her own. It is a very brave thing and honorable thing to do. What she went through, nobody should have to go through for just speaking the truth. She definitely was unfairly and unjustly targeted.”

Andrea expressed a lack of faith that the UFT would come to any whistleblower’s defense, stating, “People are always thinking about the repercussions of speaking out. Unfortunately, the unions are maybe not as strong as they used to be, or maybe they are just complicit with the larger powers that be.

“Micheal Mulgrew, the head of the UFT, has been more aligned with the mayor and the mayor’s agenda. The things he promised the teachers and the paraprofessionals for our work environment and our safety have not been implemented.

“If I saw something wrong and were to speak out, I question how far my UFT representation would go to back me when they have already agreed to the line of the mayor on reopening schools and all the agenda items the mayor has put forth.”



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