

“What they did to Jones—they’ll do to anyone who threatens their bottom line”

American workers denounce police raid on COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones

Evan Blake
17 December 2020

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. Let us know your occupation, what city and state you work in, and whether we can use your name or if you’d prefer to remain anonymous.

Last week, Florida state police carried out a fascistic raid on the home of Rebekah Jones, a prominent data scientist and COVID-19 whistleblower. Jones was targeted because she has been outspoken against the homicidal policies of Florida’s Republican Governor Ron DeSantis and the Trump administration, who have been enforcing the back-to-work and back-to-school drive that have produced the present record upsurge of the pandemic throughout the US.

The criminality of these policies was underscored by the revelations Thursday that Paul Alexander, an adviser to former Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) assistant secretary for public affairs Michael Caputo, sent numerous emails over the summer urging the HHS to promote policies that would develop “herd immunity” without a vaccine. In a July 4 email, Alexander wrote, “Infants, kids, teens, young people, young adults, middle aged with no conditions etc. have zero to little risk... so we use them to develop herd [immunity]... we want them infected.”

After being fired from Florida’s Department of Health for refusing to manipulate data, Jones now co-manages The COVID Monitor, the most comprehensive tracker of COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools in the US. The tenacious work she has conducted has won her the ire of DeSantis and slanders from *The New York Times*, the principal mouthpiece of the Democratic Party, while president-elect Joe Biden has maintained complete silence on her persecution.

In contrast, the *World Socialist Web Site* and Socialist Equality Party (US) have taken a principled stand in defense of Jones, publishing a major statement last week and statements of

support from workers across the US (available here and here). The following are further statements of support that have been sent in by readers and supporters of the WSWS.

Laura, a veteran music teacher of 29 years who works in the Westchester suburbs of New York City and has attended meetings of the New York City Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, described the spread of COVID-19 in the schools of her district, which was closed last week because of coronavirus cases but opened again this week.

She stated, “It is insanity. We have to have all the schools close, doing remote teaching. We are so close to a vaccine but so far. I am teaching while wearing double masks and eyeglasses, and wearing a parka, because the windows need to be kept open and now it is winter. People are so frazzled they cannot see what to do.

“The data is not collected on cases in the schools. The one person who is collecting, Rebekah Jones, has been raided. They are afraid of Rebekah’s data because they are afraid of truth, honesty and transparency. It’s motivated by power and greed. The ruling class wants to reopen schools in order to keep their stock portfolios soaring. They will do everything in their power to keep relevant data from leaking out.

“In turn, parents, who have been denied the assistance their tax dollars should have offered during this pandemic, are desperate to send their kids to school, so that they can dangerously go back to the labor force, again to benefit the elite rulers. Protecting teachers and students is not on the menu. We are an afterthought. They have not done anything to investigate the spread of COVID in schools. Now it is clear they have gone out of their way to confiscate and hide information that could enlighten parents and put a stop to the dangerous reopening of schools.

“I think the only way is to strike, but we have to have a mass of people. To get the truth out there will be helpful, for people to see that... At some point you have to just shut things down. ‘If the workers are organized, all they have to do is to put their hands in their pockets and they have got the capitalist class

whipped.’ Big Bill Haywood said that.”

John Burton, a civil-rights lawyer and WSWS writer from California, sent the following letter outlining the legal violations committed in the raid of Jones’ home:

I have 41 years of experience as a civil-rights lawyer specializing in police misconduct. I am a former president of the Board of Directors of the National Police Accountability Project, an association of 600 lawyers doing similar work. I am a regular contributor to the *World Socialist Web Site* on civil-rights topics. I was the Socialist Equality Party’s candidate for California Governor in 2003.

I denounce the police raid on Ms. Jones’ home. The search warrant appears to have been based on a false and misleading affidavit of probable cause, a violation of *Franks v. Delaware*. Moreover, by exhibiting and pointing firearms without any indication of a threat, the officers used excessive force and served the warrant in an unreasonable manner, a violation of the letter of the Fourth Amendment. The fact that these actions were taken in retaliation for Ms. Jones’ constitutionally protected activity makes them First Amendment violations as well.

The ruling class, whether through its Republican or Democratic representatives, has no interest in preserving the lives of the working population. According to them, people must expose themselves and their families to the COVID-19 virus at workplaces or in schools solely to maintain the fortunes of the oligarchs. This is the criminal policy behind the raid on Ms. Jones’ home. Workers, professionals and students must unite in a conscious class-based struggle against capitalism, the only rational solution to the world health crisis. Support for Rebekah Jones is essential to that fight.

Steve, a teacher in Alaska, noted, “The act of Rebekah Jones to expose the truth about COVID-19 figures in Florida hearkens back to Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, Daniel Ellsberg, Philip Agee and others who dared to expose lies of US governmental agencies and individuals. With the determination that has been demonstrated, Jones’ work stands as a model for millions of others to follow. To support her courageous struggle is to support freedom and social emancipation. Thank you for your courage. You are not alone.”

Sal, a daily reader of the WSWS, wrote: “I fully stand behind data scientist Rebekah Jones and commend her for her bravery in refusing to conform to corrupt Florida officials’ policy of reopening the state’s nonessential productive facilities and

schools in the midst of a raging, deadly pandemic. More than a true patriot, Jones is a precious ally to humanity at large.”

Jinsbek, a disabled hospital worker from California, submitted this statement of support for Jones:

Capitalism has no answer to a tsunami of preventable deaths but violent repression of anyone who brings these crimes to light. Jones and other whistleblowers like her deserve our unequivocal support.

Trump’s lackey DeSantis may be the one who directed this particular violent act of state censorship against Jones, but I have no doubt that the Democrats would’ve done nothing essentially different. President Obama told the people of Flint to let their kids eat lead paint and drink toxic water. The Democrats were active accomplices in the deployment of the National Guard and six dozen police agencies to maim water protectors during the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests. There’s no constituency for the defense of public health in either party.

One of her recent findings was that 51 out of 67 counties in Florida have *zero* available pediatric ICU beds. That’s not something the mainstream media wants to report on. They want children back in school even if that means sending them and their families to the pediatric ICU—some of those beds are being allocated to adult patients, as hospitals are running out of room in other wards.

They—the media—would rather smear Jones for completely unrelated *dropped* charges, than indict *actual* policies soaked with the blood of *hundreds of thousands*.

To defend their lives and the scientists that expose these assaults on public health—you described it succinctly as a policy of “malign neglect”—workers have to organize on their own initiative. Anyone else committed to an honest accounting of reality, including artists and other researchers, must rally to Jones’s defense. No one else will do so. DeSantis certainly doesn’t care about our lives.

And this is just the start. What they did to Jones—they’ll do to anyone who threatens their bottom line.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact