

Free COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones!

Bryan Dyne
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On Sunday, scientist and COVID-19 whistleblower Rebekah Jones tweeted that the state of Florida had issued a warrant for her arrest in a flagrant effort to intimidate the outspoken and courageous scientist.

Jones is one of the most outspoken public opponents of the “herd immunity” policy being carried out by the Trump White House and Democratic as well as Republican governors. It has resulted in the premature reopening of schools and businesses even as the pandemic surges throughout the country.

Jones has repeatedly warned of the dangers of reopening schools, countering the false narrative peddled in much of the establishment media that schools are not major sources of transmission for COVID-19.

“To protect my family from continued police violence, and to show that I’m ready to fight whatever they throw at me, I’m turning myself in to police in Florida Sunday night,” Jones said. “The Governor will not win his war on science and free speech. He will not silence those who speak out.”

At the time of this writing, Jones’ current location is unknown, and the Florida government has not even enumerated the charges against her. Jones made clear that the state of Florida was using the threat of legal prosecution to muzzle her. “The agent told my lawyer there would be only one charge, but emphasized that speaking out or going to the media may result in police ‘stacking’ additional charges. All of this just to silence a critic of a governor who failed to do his job and got thousands killed as a result,” she wrote.

She later defiantly posted, “Censored by the state of Florida until further notice. #LetHerSpeak.”

Jones’ incarceration comes one month after Florida Republican Governor Ron DeSantis ordered a police-state-style raid on her house, during which state police

aiming guns at Jones and her family. The immediate target of the police were flash drives that, according to an interview given to CNN by Jones, contain proof that Florida officials “were lying [last] January about things like internal reports and notices from the CDC,” as well as “evidence of illegal activities by the state.”

More broadly, last month’s police invasion of her home and the current arrest warrant are an attempt to silence a well-known and outspoken opponent of the back-to-work campaign.

Jones became famous last May for refusing to doctor Florida’s coronavirus case numbers to support the state government’s escalating back-to-work and back-to-school campaigns.

Now, as then, the coronavirus case numbers and death toll make a clear argument for closing down schools and non-essential workplaces to halt the pandemic. There were nearly 24,000 reported deaths in the US during the past week, averaging more than 3,400 dead each day. More than 1,200 of those deaths were in Florida alone.

After being fired from her position, Jones went on to help create and oversee Florida COVID Action and The COVID Monitor—the most comprehensive databases for tracking COVID-19 infections and deaths in Florida and in K-12 schools across the US, respectively.

To date, there have been no major statements from the Democratic Party or pseudo-left organizations such as the Democratic Socialists of America opposing the censorship of Jones.

The pretext for the December raid against Jones is a felony charge based on claims by Florida authorities that she circulated an email among state employees on November 10 that urged them to “speak up before another 17,000 people are dead.” The email continued: “You know this is wrong. You don’t have to be a part

of this. Be a hero. Speak out before it's too late."

Even before Jones turned herself in, the charges were shown to be false. She explained that, "FDLE found no evidence of a message sent last Nov. to DOH staff telling them to 'speak out' on any of the devices they took—the entire basis for the raid on my home in Dec." She also made clear that "an agent confirmed" that whatever police found on her hard drives "has nothing to do with the subject of the warrant."

At this event held on January 17, leading members of the Socialist Equality Parties in the US, Germany and UK spoke on the national and global significance of the rise of fascism in America, its social and political origins, and the necessary strategy for the working class to fight back.

Moreover, since the state's first attempt to silence Jones by claiming she broke the law is falling apart, Florida government authorities have moved on to a new allegation. As Jones tweeted, the new warrant "was issued the day after a Tallahassee judge told police that if they're not investigating a crime, they had to return my equipment. They didn't find proof of anything related to the warrant, so they invented something new to come after me for in retaliation."

The timing of the arrest warrant is also significant. It was issued in the wake of the January 6 attempted coup d'état by President Donald Trump and during the same week that the US death toll in the pandemic topped 400,000. DeSantis is making clear that the central preoccupation of the American state is not to seriously probe the immense dangers posed by Trump's attempts to overthrow the Constitution or the mass death caused by the pandemic, but to ensure that schools and businesses remain open at all costs.

In that light, Jones is an obstacle to be removed before she can reveal any more truths about the government's handling of the pandemic. The ruling class is very aware of the mass hostility to its homicidal herd immunity policies, anger that will only grow as the number of deaths spirals to ever greater heights. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now predicts that 92,000 more deaths will occur during the next three weeks.

Such projections agree with those from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), which predicts that more than 500,000 people will have died from COVID-19 in the US by mid-February.

Five hundred thousand dead! And the IHME model admits that even with a "rapid vaccine rollout" the number of dead will be essentially the same. At the same time, the authors of the model, including Chris Murray at the University of Washington in Seattle, predict that the daily death rate will level off in April, presumably a result of the policies of the incoming Biden administration.

In reality, the pandemic will continue to rage out of control as long as the necessary measures to contain the pandemic are not taken, including a lockdown of all but essential production and full compensation for those who aren't working. The science is clear.

This is ultimately why Rebekah Jones is being silenced. Just as with other persecuted whistleblowers such as Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, she took it upon herself to commit the crime of telling the working class the truth, both about the pandemic and the criminal response of the government to the public health crisis. It is now up to workers themselves to fight against censorship and defend all democratic rights as part of a broader revolutionary struggle for socialism.



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