Alabama teachers to Chicago teachers: We must stand united!

Alabama Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
9 February 2021

We, the members of the Alabama Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, give our full support and stand in solidarity with Chicago educators, who are standing up against the Democratic administration of Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the policies of the Biden administration by insisting on remote-only education. We may be a long way from Chicago, but we are not far in spirit!

Chicago teachers, you are an inspiration to Alabama teachers! Stay in the fight! We are all being pushed into the line of fire without protection.

Despite the lies by the corporate media and the politically compromised Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) politicians about "safe" reopenings, we have witnessed first-hand the human cost of doing so. In Montgomery alone, at least seven educators and staff have died from the virus. Throughout Alabama, at least another eight have perished as well. These deaths were totally preventable, and we refuse to allow any more! We do not accept that mass death is the "new normal."

Even as educators are dying, our students are being subjected to high-stakes testing and the district is proceeding with charterizing our public schools in Montgomery. Many parents and educators have been kept in the dark regarding these critical decisions.

The real reason these forces want us back in the school buildings has nothing to do with the well-being of our students. For decades these politicians have gutted public education funding, allowed our buildings to deteriorate, just as they refused to invest in high-quality remote learning technology and infrastructure. Their real motives were revealed by the world's 14th richest human, former mayor of New York City and billionaire Michael Bloomberg, who said, "Teachers are going to have to suck it up."

The reopening of schools is a fundamental part of getting workers back into the factories, so they can continue pumping profits for the corporate elites. We have not forgotten when, last April, one of the first casualties of COVID-19, a young worker at the nearby Hyundai Motors Manufacturing plant died. But these big businesses have continued with non-essential production, amassing unthinkable fortunes during the pandemic. As *USA Today* reports, Bloomberg himself has gained at least $7 billion during the pandemic, an increase of 14.4 percent in his net wealth.

We, in Alabama, have struggled over months to secure fully remote learning and teaching. Even after losing our colleagues to the virus, the local Montgomery school board and the state as a whole have agreed to only fleeting concessions meant to disarm us. After publicly stating Montgomery teachers will be allowed to teach remotely, the principals—surely at the behest of the school board, superintendent and even more powerful forces—require us to go into work one day per week. We will not back down until we are guaranteed fully remote learning and teaching!

Teachers have united and are fighting independently! The power is in the workers! We must stand united.

We are part of the network of Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees, which is completely independent of the big business political parties and the pro-corporate unions. We are building up support in preparation for a nationwide political general strike against the deadly policies of the ruling class.

Only the mobilization of the entire working class, including autoworkers, health care workers, Wal-Mart and Amazon workers, food processing workers and those in other industries, can stop this pandemic. We call upon educators and workers everywhere to join our ranks and take up this fight in unity with educators in

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