

Rand Paul, Anthony Fauci and the witch-hunt against science

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Last Tuesday, the US Senate witnessed its most disgusting spectacle since the days of Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. Rand Paul, the COVID-19 vaccine denier and proponent of mass infection, publicly accused Anthony Fauci, director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, of having helped to genetically engineer the virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic that has led to the loss of millions of lives.

Paul accused Fauci of “responsibility for four million people dying around the world from a pandemic.” He added, “all the evidence is pointing that it came from the lab, and there will be responsibility for those who funded the lab, including yourself.” Paul claimed the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) made animal viruses “more transmissible in humans, and you funded it. And you won’t admit the truth.”

Fauci, having been falsely accused of mass murder by a semi-literate imbecile, gave an appropriate, if restrained, answer. “I totally resent the lie that you are now propagating, senator,” Fauci said. “And you are implying that what we did was responsible for the deaths of individuals. I totally resent that... And if anybody is lying here, Senator it is you.”

In a reasonable society, Paul’s outburst would have been viewed as a moment of profound national degradation. Paul’s actions would have been loudly condemned by his fellow senators and by the media.

But in the Senate chamber there were crickets. The next speaker, Minnesota Democratic Senator Tina Smith, rambled on with her prepared remarks as though nothing had happened. Not a single senator defended Fauci save one, Bob Casey Jr., who did not even comment on Paul’s accusation, merely pointing to “bipartisan” support for Fauci’s “integrity.” Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who sits on the committee

before which Paul was testifying, did not participate in the hearing and has said nothing since.

If the Senate was silent, the media was overtly supportive of Paul’s grotesque display. The *Wall Street Journal*, itself a clearinghouse for anti-vaccination conspiracy theories, accused Fauci of a “lack of candor,” and of having “a conflict of interest” in his exchange with Paul.

Fauci “knows something about the research conducted at the WIV, because American taxpayer dollars helped fund it,” declared the *Journal*. “No one should expect the Chinese Communist Party to cooperate with a real inquiry into the origins of Covid-19,” wrote the newspaper. “More disappointing is the lack of candor from American scientists and officials whose conflicts of interest deserve more scrutiny.”

Not to be outdone by the far-right press, the *Washington Post* published an op-ed by the anti-Chinese propagandist Josh Rogin taking the side of Paul. “Paul actually does know what he’s talking about,” concludes Rogin.

In claiming Fauci bears responsibility for genetically engineering COVID-19, Paul, Rogin and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board are basing themselves on the conspiracy theory advocated by Nicholas Wade.

Wade claimed that two of the world’s leading virus researchers, Ralph Baric and Shi Zheng-li, developed a “method for engineering bat coronaviruses to attack other species.” This work at the WIV, Wade alleges, was “funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a part of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH).”

Based on the assertions that scientists conducted research on bat coronaviruses, Wade makes the absurd speculative leap that this research created COVID-19,

while offering no evidence to prove his assertions beyond the fact that it “could have” happened.

Wade’s absurd speculations would have remained in the trash, where they belong, had all three major US national newspapers not made the decision to endorse his falsehoods. Wade’s writings were cited as good coin by an editorial in the *Washington Post*, multiple op-eds in the *New York Times*, and multiple op-eds in the *Wall Street Journal*. These newspapers knowingly and repeatedly cited Wade without explaining his years-long track record of deliberate falsification to promote racist pseudoscience.

The embrace of the Wuhan lab lie by “mainstream” US newspapers has put wind in the sails of the fascistic former President Donald Trump, Rand Paul and other right-wing proponents of “herd immunity,” who have sought for over a year to blame China for the pandemic.

While once styling himself as a “libertarian,” Paul is now part of the fascistic wing of the Republican Party. Paul, who claimed that the 2020 election “in many ways was stolen,” has endorsed the Save America Summit next month organized by Women for America First, the group that staged the January 6 rally that fed into the fascist attack on the Capitol.

Encouraged by the Democrats’ total failure to defend Fauci in response to his false accusations, Paul criminally referred the scientist to the Justice Department Monday, declaring, ‘He’s lying about whether or not he funded gain-of-function research, and yes, he should be punished.’

The attack on Fauci over the “Wuhan Lab” fabrication is motivated by two interrelated factors. First, it is aimed at threatening, bullying and intimidating scientists into keeping silent as the United States abandons all the measures necessary to contain the pandemic even as cases surge to record levels.

To the extent that Fauci has criticized the removal of restrictions and made warnings about the extreme danger of the pandemic, he has become a central target of the fascistic right.

In March, Fauci pointed to the constant death threats that he and his family receive. “I could say something to you that somebody doesn’t like, like ‘you shouldn’t be removing mask mandates,’ and then all of a sudden you get a bunch of threats because people don’t like what you say.”

Second, it is aimed at blaming China for mass death

that is in fact the product of the policies of the financial oligarchy.

The refusal of the Democratic Party to criticize the fascistic rants of Paul is bound up with the fact that whatever tactical differences it has with Trump, the Biden administration has continued the same basic policy on both fronts, championing the removal of restrictions on the pandemic and continuing the anti-China campaign.

Despite Biden’s pledge to “follow the science,” his administration has ruled out measures to stop the spread of the disease, discouraging the wearing of masks and demanding the full reopening of in-person schooling. These actions put the United States in defiance of the World Health Organization and leading epidemiologists.

In reality, responsibility for the massive death toll in the United States lies with American capitalism. For months, the Trump administration and Democrats and Republicans in Congress covered up the dangers posed by the pandemic, and as soon as it could no longer be covered up, sought to prematurely reopen businesses and schools, leading to the present resurgence.

All class-conscious workers must oppose this right-wing witch-hunt, and put the blame where it belongs: not with China, not with scientists, but with American capitalism!



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