

The Delta variant of coronavirus is a Frankenstein produced by capitalism

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It is well understood that human activities in the conduct of commerce and the prosecution of wars have been the primary causal factors for zoonotic spillovers that have led to large outbreaks of deadly contagions. Pandemics are entwined with world history, and the COVID pandemic is no different in this regard.

The evolution of the virus that has produced the Delta variant in the span of only 18 months since the declaration of the pandemic, in the final analysis, is a byproduct of the ruling elite's utter incompetence and malign neglect in responding to the threat.

The virus's evolutionary adaptations have been greatly aided by policies that have placed profits above the well-being of the population by allowing schools and businesses to remain open, giving the virus free rein to circulate across the globe.

Dr. Yaneer Bar-Yam, head of the New England Complex Systems Institute, who has been modeling pandemics in the context of a complex global network for close to two decades, has warned that the ease of global travel, where every region of the world is connected in a matter of hours to every other place, could allow the propagation of deadlier diseases which quickly grow to pandemic proportions.

In a report from 2016, titled "Transition to Extinction," he writes, "When we introduce long-range transportation into the model, the success of more aggressive strains changes. They can use the long-range transportation to find new hosts and escape local extinctions ... the more transportation routes introduced into the model, the more highly aggressive pathogens are able to survive and spread."

Clearly, in the present chapter of the pandemic, the United States has emerged again as the pandemic's epicenter primarily due to lack of comprehensive global strategies that could eradicate the virus. After the spring surge through India, which killed a reported 400,000 people, a figure believed to be an underestimate by a factor of ten, the Delta variant quickly spread across the globe becoming the dominant strain by mid-summer. That means in only three months' time the world was facing a new pandemic of the Delta strain. In the span of that time, the US had essentially returned to business as usual, leading to the present catastrophe.

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the Delta strain accounted for more than 97 percent of all cases in the US. On August 13, there were more than 720,000 new cases of COVID-19 reported worldwide. Of these, more than 155,000 were in the United States, nearly five times the

number of cases reported in India, which ranked second.

And with the sudden rapid rise in COVID cases, the US death toll is once again inching upwards, with 769 deaths registered for the same date. The seven-day moving average for reported deaths has doubled since last month, standing at over 650 per day, or more than 4,500 per week.

These deaths are preventable, and the country has every means in its capacity to ensure not one more person dies from COVID. The blood of these victims is on the hands of the White House occupant despite concerted efforts by both Republican and Democratic politicians to sow discord and animus in the population based on issues of vaccine and mask mandates.

The real issue is not mask mandates, a totally inadequate measure given the threat of Delta, but the refusal of the Biden administration, the CDC, and state and local governments of both parties to immediately enforce a wide-scale lockdown.

Under these conditions, the bipartisan call by the ruling elites to open schools for in-class instruction is sheer insanity, which places in danger the health and well-being of 75 million plus children and adolescents of whom the vast majority remain unvaccinated.

In a month, the country has seen a dramatic rise in the number of children becoming infected. Last week, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported that nearly 94,000 children had been infected. On Saturday, August 14, 2021, just over 1,900 children were reported admitted to hospitals with COVID, the highest ever recorded. The current COVID-19 disease ravaging the youngest in the population has been described aptly as the "pandemic of the innocent" considering continued attempts to minimize the impact of the more severe Delta variant.

As Professor Amber Schmidtke, a renowned science communicator who teaches at the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth, Kansas, noted, "Not only are these kids sick, but every age group has met or exceeded previous maximums for ER visits for COVID-19 illness. It's not correct to say that kids don't get sick from COVID-19. That is *disinformation*. Call it when you see it." [Emphasis added]

If that were not enough, further concerns are emerging by frontline health care workers who are reporting a surge in children diagnosed with a both COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Dr. Pia Pannaraj, an infectious diseases specialist at Children's Hospital in Los Angeles, told NPR this concerning phenomenon is putting 'babies up until about a year and a half or two years of life' at risk.

Attempts have been made throughout the pandemic by the ruling class to suggest that schools are islands where the virus does not spread, or that they are separate entities that play no role in community spread. In a recent conversation, Dr. Bar-Yam affirms that the relationship between infections in schools and high transmissions in households has been strongly established. It is impossible to separate the issue of infections at schools from infection in homes and, more broadly, in the community. Schools must be closed to stop Delta's continued spread.

As of Friday, the World Health Organization reported that there have been 205,338,159 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 4,333,094 deaths globally. This ghastly figure is an undercount by at least a factor of three as analysis of excess deaths suggest the human catastrophe is far higher than reports would indicate.

Unchecked, the SARS-CoV-2 has been allowed to disseminate into every community, leading to more virulent and deadly variants. Unfortunately, the Delta variant will not be the last.

What is most striking about the Delta strain has been its ability to evade immunity and transmit so much faster than its predecessors. It also replicates with tremendous efficiency, creating copies of itself at a rate thousands of times higher than when the "wild" version first emerged less than two years ago.

Within each infected person, the virus invades living cells and makes billions of copies of itself by transforming cells into virus-making factories. Each of these replicated copies has the potential for mutation within each person—vaccinated or not—that continues the spread and further mutation of the evolving virus.

What policy makers and governmental officials are ignoring, as they pursue reopening schools and forcing parents back into the workplace, is that the limited measures that had proven only partly effective against the spread of the coronavirus previously may be completely futile given the more virulent biological properties of the Delta variant.

Dr. Deepti Gurdasani recently warned that this is not a virus we can learn to live with: "Over time we've had many new variants arise in different parts of the world and they have shown a level of escape from previous immunity, which means that if you're immune against a previous variant of the virus, it doesn't necessarily mean that you're immune against a new strain. What that means is that even if you have a level of immunity against previous variants, you may not be able to reach the herd immunity threshold because this virus is constantly evolving."

Even breakthrough infections are becoming more commonplace with Delta among those fully immunized. This is partly a product of the biology of the virus, but more the result of the natural waning of the immunity generated by the vaccines, after the passage of time.

Most of those infected after vaccination will be spared a severe course of infection. Yet a growing number of the victims of such post-vaccination infections are finding their way into hospital beds, intensive care units, and even the grave. More worrisome is that people with breakthrough infections can transmit the virus as effectively as those who become infected without having ever received the vaccines.

Many scientists and doctors are even beginning to refer to the Delta strain as an entirely different virus. "The delta variant is

almost like a whole new COVID virus, as it behaves very differently from the previous COVID strains," reported Dr. Mike Hansen, a pulmonologist and critical care physician, on his educational public website, explaining that the variant's multiple spike protein mutations allow it to enter the body's cells with greater ease and evade the body's immune system.

In a manner of speaking, Delta is a Frankenstein virus that has been allowed to emerge by the inaction of capitalist governments around the world. And it is currently filling hospitals, in the worst conditions witnessed since last winter, and taking an unprecedentedly heavy toll on children. Just this weekend Dallas, Texas, reported that all ICU beds for children were fully occupied.

Despite these dangers, the ruling elite have continuously employed every conceivable measure to prevent any effective comprehensive public health strategy that would place eradication of the virus on their agenda. And subordinated to the diktats of the financial markets, public health efforts have given the coronavirus ample room to develop and spread, in direct contradiction to scientific principles.

In short, the Delta variant is the product of capitalism's complete disregard for human life. With less than one-fifth of the world's population vaccinated and a significant portion immunologically naive to the virus (with no prior infections), it is safe to assume we are still at the early stages of the pandemic whose final outcome, as a social and political event, not just a medical one, remains to be decided.

Global eradication using all resources and capacity must be the primary objective of the world's people. All other issues must be subordinated to the full support of the populations, including financial, job, and food security as well as isolation and medical facilities to treat and care for the population until the coronavirus has been eliminated from every region of the planet.



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