

Bonnaroo music festival proceeds in the midst of surging COVID-19 infections in Tennessee

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In little over a week, approximately 100,000 concertgoers from all around the country will descend on Manchester, Tennessee, located about an hour outside of Nashville, for the annual Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival. To put it bluntly: the event, taking place under conditions in which the US is in the midst of a devastating new wave of the coronavirus pandemic, driven in part by the highly infectious Delta variant, is a social crime whose logical outcome will be more deaths and the further spread of the virus in communities throughout the country.

The perpetrators of this crime are not only the organizers behind the festival, but also local and state officials, and above all, the Biden administration itself, which is pursuing the homicidal policy of reopening schools and the economy, all the while refusing to take any serious measures to combat the virus.

While the festival is scheduled to run from Thursday, September 2 through Sunday, September 5, guests are able to begin arriving as early as Tuesday of the same week.

Bonnaroo is but one of a number of festivals and concerts being held this year as part of a continuous effort on the part of the ruling class to “normalize” the pandemic, i.e., to numb the public’s consciousness to mass death. Bonnaroo, which first took place in 2002, was forced to cancel altogether in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. It now follows in the wake of Chicago’s four-day Lollapalooza festival—correctly characterized as a superspreader event—which over 385,000 people attended.

It was recently reported that there have been over 200 confirmed cases—an undercount to be sure—among attendees of Lollapalooza. Significantly, 127 of those cases are among vaccinated individuals, with 76 confirmed cases among unvaccinated individuals.

Lollapalooza required its attendees to show proof of vaccination, or a negative COVID-19 test issued within 72 hours of entry. The predictable outcome of cases following the festival exposes the lie that these events, even with certain measures in place, can be conducted safely and responsibly.

Taking cues from Lollapalooza, Bonnaroo issued an announcement on Twitter stating, “The safety of our patrons and staff is our number one priority. As such a full COVID-19 vaccination or negative COVID-19 test will be required to attend Bonnaroo 2021.” Supposedly, masks will only be required for indoor spaces, although if Lollapalooza is any indication, any masking guidelines will quickly fall to the wayside.

Notably, a Dutch electronic dance music festival called Verknijpt, held last month in Utrecht, Netherlands, has been linked to over 1,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19, despite having stricter requirements than what Bonnaroo is demanding. For instance, unvaccinated Verknijpt attendees were required to show proof of negativity within 40 hours in order to gain entry. City officials have since revised this to 24 hours.

Coffee County, where the city of Manchester is located, is a predominantly rural area, with a median household income of \$50,351 in 2019 and 14.4 percent of the population living in poverty. To date, Coffee County has experienced 13,212 confirmed cases of COVID-19 along with 123 deaths. From August 10 to August 16, there have been an average of 57 confirmed cases per day. In terms of vaccination, less than half of the county’s population has received one dose, including the hundreds of children under 12 who are unable to be inoculated. The number of fully vaccinated individuals is even lower. The festival threatens to overload the county’s already inadequate and

underfunded health care system, which has just one hospital.

As for Tennessee itself, the state is experiencing a rapid surge of COVID-19, driven largely by the reopening of schools. As of this writing, the state has seen 5,478 new cases and 27 deaths since the previous day. The total number of cases in the state is close to 1 million, while deaths are at 13,045. The state's Republican governor, Bill Lee, has refused to take any serious measures to contain the virus while demanding that the economy fully reopens.

Taking his cues from Florida's homicidal governor, Ron DeSantis, Lee recently issued an executive order which allows parents to opt out of school mask mandates. Meanwhile, members of Tennessee's state legislature have been threatening to withhold funding from districts which enact safety measures aimed at protecting students and educators.

Amid the latest deadly surge of the pandemic, some musicians have taken the principled stand of canceling their shows altogether out of concern for the lives of attendees and workers. Stevie Nicks, known for her work with the band Fleetwood Mac, announced earlier this month the cancellation of her tour. Limp Bizkit, a metal band popular in the 2000s, after performing at Lollapalooza, announced that they were canceling the remainder of their tour, citing COVID-19 concerns.

Nicks, for her part, wrote in her statement, "These are challenging times with challenging decisions that have to be made. I want everyone to be safe and healthy and the rising COVID cases should be of concern to all of us."



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