

Fight for the eradication of the pandemic! Join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US)
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As the school year begins, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party, calls on all young people to turn to the working class and take up a fight for the elimination and eradication of the coronavirus pandemic.

Since the beginning of the pandemic more than a year and a half ago, a staggering 4.5 million people have died worldwide, according to official figures, including more than 650,000 in the United States alone.

Despite the lying claims of politicians and the media, the pandemic is far from over. Fueled by the highly infectious Delta variant, new cases in the US have surged to their highest levels since January: more than 164,000 a day. The daily death toll is a staggering 1,200 people.

Hospitals and ICUs are again overwhelmed with scores of critically ill patients including, most tragically, young people and children. Millions of unvaccinated children are currently being herded into crowded classrooms, even as new cases and hospitalizations of children are at record levels. There have already been numerous tragic deaths of teachers who have recently returned to school.

College campuses are also opening for in-person instruction, and there have already been widespread outbreaks. At Duke University, where 98 percent of students and 92 percent of faculty are vaccinated, 349 students and 15 faculty and staff tested positive just in the past week, forcing the university to end indoor dining. There have been similar outbreaks at the University of California Berkeley, and at the University of Michigan, every residence hall has reported cases.

The pandemic is the defining political experience for an entire generation of young people coming of age in the United States and internationally. It has profoundly altered every aspect of our lives, marking in the consciousness of millions the dividing line: before and after the pandemic began.

For young people, as for the working class as a whole, it is critical to draw the lessons of this experience: How did this catastrophe happen? Who is responsible? What must be done?

From the beginning of the pandemic, the ruling class rejected the necessary and viable measures to save lives—globally

coordinated lockdowns, travel restrictions, universal testing and contact tracing, and the isolation of infected individuals—because they infringed on the wealth of the capitalist class.

On the other hand, the rich profited enormously off the pandemic. The multi-trillion-dollar Wall Street bailouts of 2020 fueled an orgy of speculation, and the wealth of the oligarchy skyrocketed to unprecedented levels.

In the US, the policy of “herd immunity”—allowing the virus to spread unchecked—was spearheaded by the Trump administration. The fascistic conspiracies of Trump and his henchmen, which culminated in the January 6, 2021 coup attempt, were ultimately aimed at securing the removal of any restrictions on economic activity, no matter how minimal.

The Democrats, however, fully supported the “back to work” campaign in the spring of last year, which fueled the massive surge in the fall and winter. The Biden administration is now spearheading the reopening of schools, which will become petri dishes for the spread of the virus among children, teachers and the population as a whole.

Internationally, the same policy has been implemented in virtually every country, whether under outright fascists such as Bolsonaro in Brazil, or by nominally “left” or Social Democratic governments. While they might have tactical differences about how to proceed, the rival sections of the ruling class share the same ultimate aim: the protection of the wealth of the oligarchy.

Eradicate the virus!

The IYSSE calls for students and youth to fight for a policy of eradicating the virus, which would entail the immediate shutting down of non-essential production and the closure of the schools to stop the spread of the coronavirus and save lives, combined with emergency assistance to all those impacted.

Vaccination alone is not a strategy to stop the pandemic. Not

only are millions of people still unvaccinated, including all children under the age of 12. Science shows that even vaccinated individuals can spread the virus, and there are alarming reports of “breakthrough” infections—that is, the illness and even death of individuals who have been vaccinated.

The global spread—with new cases at near record levels of 650,000 a day, with daily deaths at nearly 10,000—means that the virus is continuously evolving into more infectious and vaccine-resistant variants, like the Delta variant.

Contrary to the claims of the representatives of the ruling class, it is not necessary to “live with the virus.” Scientists have explained that coordinated action on a world scale could and still can eliminate and eradicate the virus in a matter of months. Indeed, this is the only rational, scientific path for ending the pandemic.

Turn to the working class and fight for socialism!

The development of a comprehensive, global campaign to eradicate the virus requires the intervention of the international working class, the revolutionary social force to which students must turn.

While the SARS-CoV-2 virus emerged out of natural biological processes, the social catastrophe caused by its uncontrolled spread demonstrates the irrationality of a system based on the private ownership of the means of production and the division of the world into competing nation-states.

In the broadest sense, the pandemic is a symptom; the disease is capitalism, which subordinates all of society to the profit motive and is organically incapable of implementing a rational response to the pandemic.

This is true of every other crisis facing humanity, including the growth of fascism, massive levels of inequality, the drive towards world war, and climate change, itself a product of the subordination of society to the interests of finance capital. The issues that concern the youth of today are therefore inseparable from the broader issues confronting the working class.

The development of a genuine socialist movement in the working class requires a break with all of the existing political institutions of bourgeois society, including the Democratic Party and its appendages, “left” organizations such as the Democratic Socialists of America.

The experiences of millions of young people who supported Bernie Sanders—who liquidated his campaign at the height of the crisis in 2020, and promptly threw his support behind Biden—demonstrates that it is impossible to reform the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street and the military.

The experience of the pandemic also demonstrates the reactionary character of the politics of racial and gender identity, promoted heavily on the campuses. The claim that the

fundamental dividing line is race, gender or sexual orientation has been refuted by a pandemic that has devastated all workers, in the US and throughout the world.

Nor are the trade unions instruments of working class struggle. Throughout the pandemic, the unions have played a critical role in forcing workers back to work and suppressing independent opposition to the homicidal policies of the ruling class. Now, the teachers unions are leading the campaign, along with the Biden administration, to reopen schools, guaranteeing the infection and death of scores of children and teachers.

The development of working class opposition requires the building of a network of rank-and-file organizations to mobilize the collective strength of workers throughout the world. To this end, the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement, has initiated the formation of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

This is the basic issue confronting students and youth as campuses reopen. The pandemic has exposed the irreconcilable conflict between the capitalist class and the working class, the vast majority of the population. A titanic struggle is both inevitable and necessary, but for the working class to prevail requires the building of a revolutionary socialist leadership.

The IYSSE, the student and youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party, is fighting to build that leadership among youth. This is the only viable path that exists for the progressive development of human society. We urge all youth, students and workers who agree with this perspective to draw the necessary conclusions and join the IYSSE.

Join the IYSSE and take up the fight for socialism!



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