

American capitalism normalizes mass death

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Twenty-two months since the emergence of COVID-19, there is no end in sight to the pandemic, which continues to kill on a massive scale.

The center of the pandemic is again in the United States, where the official death toll this week surpassed 700,000. More than 9.1 million years of life have been lost to COVID-19 in the US, according to a study published this week in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

On Monday, 935 people lost their lives; on Tuesday, 2,152; on Wednesday, 2,228; and on Thursday, 1,944. Since the start of the week, in just four days, a staggering 7,000 died. In the past month alone, 51,000 have perished in overcrowded hospitals, homes and nursing centers.

On July 4, US President Joe Biden declared “independence” from the COVID-19 pandemic, saying, “We can live our lives, our kids can go back to school, our economy is roaring back.” Biden discouraged mask wearing and urged vaccinated people not to social distance, claiming that the pandemic was all but over. Since that time, more than 80,000 Americans have died from the pandemic.

Even in the most optimistic scenarios, such as one released by the COVID-19 scenario hub based on anticipating a dramatic decline in cases, the death toll will hit over 800,000 by the spring.

But at the present rate of death, with an average of 1,726 people dying each day, more than 300,000 people will die in the next six months, bringing the official US death toll to well over one million.

Among the dead are 480 children, including 20 in just the past week alone. And more than 100,000 children have lost a caregiver to the pandemic, according to a study published in July.

Throughout the country, from Wisconsin to California, hospital intensive care units are filled to capacity. Hospitals are issuing emergency protocols for nurses and doctors to make the horrific decision to

determine who will live and who will die, due to a shortage of respirators and other life-saving equipment.

One in three people who are infected with COVID-19 will get “long COVID,” with symptoms lasting for more than two weeks. For hundreds of thousands, this means permanent debilitation: chronic fatigue, pain and long-term cognitive impairment, including among an entire generation of children.

But with more than 2,000 people dying each day—a rate greater than any war the United States has ever fought—the US political establishment is declaring that the pandemic is all but over. “As we end this pandemic, we must get ready for the next,” tweeted US Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday.

To talk about the “end” of the COVID-19 pandemic as two thousand people die day after day is insane. But in the twisted logic of the American ruling class, “ending” the pandemic simply means ignoring it. The level of death being witnessed in the United States is to be treated as the “new normal.”

What is taking place is a horrifying normalization of death.

In the wealthiest and most powerful capitalist country in the world, close to one million people are dead from a preventable disease. These deaths were the result of lies and cover-ups by the Trump administration and Congress, which deluded and disarmed the public as the disease spread throughout the country in January and February.

On May 14, 2020, the Subcommittee on Health of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce held a hearing on “Scientific Integrity in the COVID-19 Response,” in which whistleblower Rick Bright excoriated the Trump administration’s response to the pandemic. Bright declared that “public health officials were fully aware of the emerging threat of COVID-19 by early January 2020.” But the US government was “intent on downplaying this catastrophic threat.”

It would be the first, last and only hearing of its kind. While Congress would continue to call public health officials to testify, it would be within the framework of accelerating plans to reopen schools and businesses. There was no effort to investigate Bright's allegations: that a systematic cover-up, involving both the Democrats and Republicans, disarmed the United States' response to the pandemic.

The failure to investigate the response to the pandemic continued under the Biden administration, which made its appeal to the American public on the basis of popular hostility to the Trump administration's disastrous handling of the pandemic.

Notwithstanding the scale of the disaster, it has not been the subject of any serious public investigation, even where there was clear evidence of wrongdoing, such as the sale of stock by members of Congress briefed on the pandemic, the revelations of which forced Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Richard Burr to resign from his post.

The failure to hold anyone to account for the disastrous response to the pandemic is intentional. From the standpoint of the ruling class, the actions that contributed to the massive death toll were not mistakes. This is why there have been no investigations and no one has been held to account, because this is the policy advocated by the entire ruling class and the entire capitalist system.

To the extent that blame can be assigned, it must be on the basis of a myth that does not indict the US policy response. This is the origin of the "lab leak" lie, which seeks to blame China for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The US government's cover-up was part of the policy of "herd immunity," which remains the policy to this day. "Infants, kids, teens, young people, young adults, middle aged with no conditions etc. have zero to little risk... so we use them to develop herd... we want them infected," wrote Trump administration official Paul Elias Alexander.

This was the same policy that led UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to declare last year, "no more fucking lockdowns—let the bodies pile high in their thousands."

To the extent that the ruling class has a strategy for responding to the pandemic, it is to allow the mass infection of the population, which, combined with the immunity generated from vaccines, will supposedly

prevent major new surges of the disease. This means that COVID-19 will become endemic in the population, killing perhaps several hundred thousand people each year.

This "optimistic" scenario relies on the prayer that a new COVID-19 variant does not emerge that, like the Delta variant, leads to a surge in cases and deaths.

American capitalism's ability to accept and "normalize" mass death must be treated as a warning. All arguments that a nuclear war is inconceivable because society is not prepared to accept the loss of millions of lives have been refuted by the response to the pandemic. If the American ruling class is prepared to accept the loss of a million lives from a preventable disease, it will accept the deaths of tens of millions in a nuclear war. As Bloomberg News commented last year:

Yes, the US has botched its response to COVID-19. At the same time, its experience shows that America as a nation can in fact tolerate casualties, too many in fact. It had long been standard Chinese doctrine that Americans are "soft" and unwilling to take on much risk. If you were a Chinese war game planner, might you now reconsider that assumption?

While the entire capitalist order stands behind the "herd immunity" policy, the working class cannot accept the continued wave of mass death. It must intervene, in the US and throughout the world, to put an end to the pandemic, to demand and enforce the necessary public health measures to eradicate the virus.



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