

“I am so distraught by the clamoring for war, whether it’s in defense of Ukraine or just stemming from anti-Russian hate”

Educators and students on the US West Coast denounce the drive to war with Russia and lifting of COVID-19 mitigation measures

Our reporters
4 March 2022

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to teachers, workers, and students in California, Washington, and Hawaii about the drive to war in Ukraine, which threatens to escalate into a direct conflict between NATO and Russia, and its relation to the mass death and misery caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amid mounting war hysteria in the United States, all measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 are being dismantled. Most recently, the Biden administration has worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Democrats across the country to lift mask mandates and force the population to “live with the virus,” i.e., accept unending mass infections, deaths and debilitation.

The following interviews were conducted in the leadup to a meeting at 12pm PST this Saturday called by the West Coast Educators Rank-And-File Safety Committees, titled, “Stop the drive to World War III!” Registration information can be found [here](#). We have excluded photos and changed some names to protect interviewees’ identities.

Michael, a high school teacher in Seattle, Washington, told the WSWs, “The anti-Russia hysteria is not any kind of surprise. This is the sort of thing that happens in wartime. Demonizing an enemy is a necessary step when a ruling class wants to get a population, the working class, to fall in line. It can be terrifyingly effective. I remember reading about the lynching of a German socialist during the First World War. It’s horrifying and angering. It’s got to be called out.

“Joe Biden put it out clearly that he’s a capitalist. Both the war drive and his COVID policies are about business thriving, which means keeping money flowing hand over fist. That’s the objective. Their game plan is in service of

that.

“In 2016, all of the Democrats I knew were planning their celebrations, excited for Hillary Clinton because they said there was no way she could lose to Donald Trump. When he won, there was embarrassed anger. Trump’s a fool, so there must have been an evil mastermind who was really behind all of this.

“The US has turned Putin into a super-villain. They are really trying to call for World War Three. The Democrats have created this. It’s terrifying. One can see how easy it could be for one bullet to come from the gun of Europe or the US, and that can continue to spiral and happen really fast.

“Putin is a thug, a gangster. He stands against every interest of the Russian working class; the Russian working class would do itself a favor by getting rid of him as soon as possible. But our task within the borders of the US is to fight against the US ruling class.

“I think it is vital for workers to recognize that there is no savior. There is not going to be an outside force that’s going to come top-down and start solving the problems that are in front of us. Ultimately it is our task, it’s our job. We have got to do something about COVID. The arguments against doing something about COVID consistently evolve into something horrific, whether it’s talking about young people or the immunocompromised. There is no humane justification for it. Whether war or COVID, the working class has to do something about it.”

Katy, a teacher in Richmond, California, commented, “It’s definitely about imperialism, it’s definitely about oil and resources. The US is sending ammunition into Ukraine. It’s sick that a powerful organization like NATO is in your face. People in Russia don’t want the war. The same was

here with the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Sal, a community college student in the San Francisco Bay Area, stated, “I don’t think it’s a coincidence that the American ruling class has abandoned what little was left of the anti-COVID mitigation measures amid the war between Russia and Ukraine.”

He noted that the war “was provoked by antagonistic remarks by US officials throughout the preceding few months; by the US’s vital material support for the fascist forces that ousted the pro-Russian Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich in the 2014 coup; and, more broadly, by the continual eastward expansion of NATO toward Russia since the USSR’s dissolution in 1991... a move that the Russian ruling class regards as a mortal threat.

“Clearly, the Biden administration is opportunistically taking advantage of the war—in whose outbreak it played no small part—as a means to divert attention from its longstanding goal of eliminating all COVID restrictions, which it sees as pesky impediments to the extraction of profits from workers’ labor.

“Many seem to have difficulty recognizing that opposition to US-NATO imperialism does not necessitate support for Russian militarism. As the WSWS aptly notes, this war has generated widespread confusion and disorientation.”

Michael, a former educator in San Luis Obispo, California, commented, “We have long been immersed in a war that never ends, where the parties are misidentified for sinister intent, and with enormous success. This forces one to ask whether bellicose conflicts are fought across the lines dividing countries, religions, and races, as we’ve been told, or between a global ruling class and the working class.”

Liz, a special education teacher in Hawaii, said, “I am so distraught by the clamoring for war, whether it’s in defense of Ukraine or just stemming from anti-Russian hate.”

She added, “The mainstream media, in cahoots with the state department and the war machine makers, have once again manufactured consent for US involvement. We know this never ends well for working people of the world, regardless of what country they live in. I’m especially dismayed by the warmongering stance my so-called ‘leftist’ and ‘progressive’ friends are taking against Russia and Putin. Some friends are hysterically demanding that the US sanction Russia and send Ukraine more weapons.

“This situation could have been prevented. The double standards shown by Washington that Russia fall into line and abide by its impossible demands, while at the same time breaking every promise and treaty, creates an impossible situation for Putin. In his eyes, a longtime adversary backed a coup staged by far-right extremists in a country on his border and overthrew the democratically elected leader. The

US has forced his hand but claiming he’s the sole aggressor.

“I most definitely believe there is a connection in the actions and timing of this drive to war and the abandoning of COVID mitigation measures. The US utterly failed to contain the virus and in addition, increased the division amongst Americans on COVID policy. Lifting mandates for masking is a sign they’re not even going to pretend to try anymore. There will be no more help for Americans. It is a disaster.”

K?heha, another teacher from Hawaii, noted, “Hawai‘i continues to have an indoor mask mandate that includes schools. Hawai‘i looks as if it is in a pre-pandemic state with the presence of tourists and the traffic on the road. Plenty of Hawai‘i people are traveling, too. People still get sick, but there is an intentional effort to minimize that fact.

“Now, instead of shutting down a classroom when there’s a report of a COVID-positive student or staff, the classroom remains open since people are now vaccinated. Only the positive person is isolated. It doesn’t make sense since we know that vaccinated people can still acquire COVID and become ill. Starting this Sunday, proof of vaccination or a negative test result will no longer be required at eateries, bars, gyms and other establishments, just in time for Spring Break.

“Hawai‘i is very much driven by a capitalist mindset of profit over people. Sadly, many people are falling in line with that thinking and the idea of an individual’s right to choose the degree of safety she or he wants to observe. God forbid Hawai‘i should lose any money over prospective tourists during Spring Break; hence, the lifted restrictions regarding vaccinations.”

Speaking on the war in Ukraine, K?heha commented, “I think the war is falsely being presented as a need to protect democracy, for which the hypocritical US has no business leading. It’s all about capitalism and the potential for exploiting Russia’s resources. A new kind of colonialism masked by the need to protect ‘democracy.’

“An incredible, shameless effort has been made to minimize the risk of the pandemic and the tragic loss of lives for the sake of capitalism, and the war would be another opportunity to continue that effort.”



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