

US educators call for building a mass movement to prevent World War III and end the pandemic

Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
11 March 2022

On Sunday, the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees across the West Coast, the South and the Northeast regions of the United States held online meetings to discuss the recent developments with the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the serious dangers posed by the US–NATO provocations toward World War III. In attendance were educators, graduate students and other workers from California, Washington, New York, Alabama, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia and Florida.

The discussions focused on the connection between the criminal and catastrophic mishandling of the pandemic, with nearly 1 million official deaths in the US, and the reckless drive to war.

At the meeting in the South, an Alabama teacher spoke about the relationship between the working class and the ruling class. She explained that the war drive is already being used as justification for attacks on workers' wages and livelihoods, stating, "We have to realize that without workers things don't run and corporations don't make anything. We have to realize that we can shut things down to eliminate COVID and stop war. We are saying no to COVID, and no to World War III, and we need to do this ourselves."

A graduate student in Alabama spoke about the dangerous changes to masking recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which he said open up most of the country to "mass infection and death." He spoke about recent studies on the BA.2 subvariant and the fact that through mass infection, the virus has been allowed to evolve to be more transmissible and more vaccine-evading.

A student in Florida made the point that the recent CDC changes have already emboldened far-right and

anti-science forces. At a recent press conference at the University of South Florida, fascist governor Ron DeSantis verbally attacked and intimidated students who were wearing masks, leading some of them to remove their masks.

There was also an important exchange about the nature of the rank-and-file committees and the difference between fighting for day-to-day survival and fighting for a political strategy for the working class. The working class faces a conscious policy of mass infection by the Democrats and Republicans, but it also has the power of labor and can end the pandemic and war.

The meeting in the Northeast was attended by retired and active New York City educators, student teachers, and health care workers.

"How do you fight against war?" one of the moderators asked. "Our answer is that it is the same way you fight COVID: through the political independence and international unity of the working class." A report on the war reviewed the historical background of the Ukraine crisis, in particular the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the American/EU-supported 2014 coup in Ukraine, which conditioned the events in the region today.

During the discussion, a Brooklyn middle-school teacher stated, "The reality on the ground in the New York schools is that there are still COVID cases. I only know this because I happened to overhear it being discussed when a parent called to let them know a child had tested positive. No one was notified of any of these cases. Most of the staff in my school are going to keep their masks on. The union has totally abandoned us. They are doing nothing. They are looking out for ruling

class interests. We need someone to represent us. We cannot trust them.”

Her remarks sparked a discussion on the role of rank-and-file committees in “supervising” the unions. A retired transit worker spoke on this and said that it was impossible to oversee the unions. “They’ll never let us do that. They will do everything in their power to suppress the workers and that has been accelerated by the war drive. They are obligated to suppress all workers.”

Following the discussions, each committee presented and voted to pass the following resolution.

The Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees oppose the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is a desperate and reactionary response by the Putin government to the eastward expansion of NATO and the efforts of US imperialism to maintain its global hegemony. Ukraine is the initial battleground for what threatens to become a global conflagration between the US–NATO powers and Russia, with the potential to spiral out of control and into a nuclear world war with catastrophic implications for the entire planet.

After decades of unending war throughout the Middle East and North Africa, American imperialism is once again clamoring for war under the hypocritical pretense of defending “human rights” and “democracy.” The corporate media seeks to inure the population to war through propaganda, lies and the promotion of xenophobia. They cover up Washington’s years-long funneling of billions of dollars in armaments to Ukraine and promotion of fascist groups including Svoboda, the Right Sector, and the Azov Regiment.

The American ruling class sees the drive to war as a way out of the escalating domestic crisis. After allowing mass infections and deaths from COVID-19 for over two years, the US government seeks to deflect mounting internal tensions outward against Russia. The creation of a foreign and external enemy coincides with the disastrous surge of the Omicron variant, which will cause the death toll in the US to surpass 1 million within weeks.

Contrary to the false claims by the entire political establishment that COVID-19 is now “endemic” and essentially harmless, infections and deaths from Omicron remain catastrophic worldwide while the BA.2 subvariant surges in many countries. In the US, an average of 1,700 people are dying every day from

COVID-19. Children have been immensely impacted by Omicron, facing mass infection and record deaths over the past two months.

Recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to lift mask mandates and end contact tracing places millions of lives in danger. All remaining mitigation measures are being dropped in unison across states, counties and school districts throughout the country.

Our committees reject these efforts to remove all mitigations to slow the spread of COVID-19 and the open adoption of “herd immunity” policies that serve only the interests of the corporations and financial elite. We call for the building of a mass movement of the working class to stop the drive to world war and end the pandemic through a global strategy to contain and eliminate the virus using all available public health measures.



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