

# Former Trump officials, fascists, Grayzone editor Max Blumenthal headline anti-vaxxer rally in LA

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13 April 2022

This past Sunday, roughly 1,000 people attended an anti-vaccine, anti-masking “Defeat the Mandates” rally in Los Angeles, California. As with the previous event held earlier this year in Washington D.C., despite heavy promotion on right-wing media outlets, the rally failed to attract an audience beyond anti-science reactionaries, Christian zealots and far-right pro-Trump elements.

Ignoring the deaths from COVID-19 of over one million Americans, including over 1,000 children in 2021 alone, and the spread of the BA.2 variant, the well-financed event was dominated by disoriented petty-bourgeois and upper-middle-class layers denouncing the lockdowns and mask and vaccine mandates that have already been all but eliminated.

Pastor Ricardo Beas began the event by imploring the crowd to “hold hands... turn to each-other” and say, “I love you.” In between chants of “lock them up,” the crowd waved American flags and carried signs attacking public health measures, medical science and vaccines.

The lineup of speakers included a who’s who of COVID-19 denialists, Republican operatives, January 6 insurrectionists and outright fascists. Speakers included “People’s Convoy” co-organizer Brian Brase, right-wing lawyer Leigh Dundas, Oath Keeper co-founder and “Constitutional Sheriff” Richard Mack, former Trump administration official Paul “We want them infected” Alexander, and author and editor of *The Grayzone* Max Blumenthal.

Dundas, who has yet to be charged for her role in inciting the January 6, 2021 storming of the US Capitol, compared public health measures aimed at stemming the spread of the coronavirus to the Third Reich and called for putting “criminals on trial and... to death.”

In his speech, Dr. Alexander, a regular on Steve Bannon’s fascist *War Room* podcast, led the crowd in chants of “lock them up,” referring to Anthony Fauci, Deborah Birx and “the Pfizer board.”

Attempting to palm off the billionaire-funded rally as an

expression of working class opposition to “government tyranny,” Alexander praised the “Canadian truckers” who occupied Ottawa earlier this year and called on “MAGA people to come to the side of the People’s Convoy.” He ended his speech with a call for American parents to “lay down their life” to prevent their children from being administered a COVID-19 vaccine.

In his short speech, journalist Blumenthal presented the rally as a “grassroots” example of the working class rising up in opposition to “unscientific anti-worker mandates” and “experimental gene therapy.”

Seeking to cultivate a “red-brown” alliance between workers and fascists, Blumenthal declared, “This is not a left versus right issue. This is about economic rights... human rights and our constitutional rights.” He went on to call for an alliance of the “99 percent” against the “biomedical security state.”

Instead of calling for increased protections for workers and their families, Blumenthal demanded that schools be reopened and that workers who refused to get vaccinated be allowed to return to work and infect their co-workers.

Absurdly and vilely, Blumenthal invoked imprisoned journalist Julian Assange to justify his pro-pandemic perspective, comparing the jailing and torture of Assange to the fate of those who are “censored” on the Internet for spreading COVID-19 misinformation. Blumenthal, in deference to the pro-Trump crowd and his fascist co-speakers, never mentioned that it was during the Trump administration that Assange was kidnapped by British authorities from the Ecuadorian embassy in London and thrown into Belmarsh prison, where he continues to languish under threat of extradition to the US.

Two weeks prior to the rally, Blumenthal’s publication published a long article by liberal journalist Christian Parenti titled, “How the organized Left got Covid wrong, learned to love lockdown and lost its mind: an autopsy.” In the article, Parenti claimed COVID-19 deaths were overblown and

defended the Great Barrington Declaration as “the most effective public health strategy.”

Parenti acknowledged that the Great Barrington Declaration, which the WWSWS correctly characterized as a “manifesto of death,” was associated with a “libertarian think tank.” However, he omitted the fact that this think tank is the Koch brothers-backed American Institute for Economic Research (AIER). AIER is also funded by ExxonMobil and tobacco companies Philip Morris International and US Marlboro. The ultra-right corporate sounding board previously published studies promoting the benefits of “sweatshops” and downplaying the threat of climate change.

Listed sponsors of the April 10 “Defeat the Mandates” rally included the Front Line COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance (FLCCC), Children’s Health Defense, and The Unity Project. All of these groups are major purveyors of COVID-19 misinformation and have substantial financial and personal connections to Republican lawmakers, pro-Trump militia elements and the Trump family.

- FLCCC was founded by doctors Pierre Kory and Paul Marik, both of whom spoke at Sunday’s rally. Both doctors have promoted ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine as a “cure” for COVID-19. In a November, 2021 Senate Homeland Security Committee meeting, Kory, appearing at the invitation of Wisconsin Republican Senator Ron Johnson, testified that ivermectin was a “miracle drug” against COVID-19, and that if the population were given access to it, “the pandemic will end, the economy can reopen, social interaction and activity can resume, and life can normalize.”

A study recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that of 1,300 people infected with the coronavirus in Brazil, treatment with ivermectin as opposed to a placebo “did not result in a lower incidence of medical admission to a hospital due to progression of COVID-19.”

According to the FLCCC, one day after its inception, on April 6, 2020, the organization was already in contact with “the White House COVID-19 response team headed at the time by Jared Kushner.”

- Children’s Health Defense was created by anti-vaccine promoter Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. The son of the assassinated senator from New York, Kennedy, Jr., who claims vaccines cause autism, has used his connections to the Washington elite to finance and promote anti-vaccine sentiment around the world. Over the years, Kennedy has spouted his reactionary views on Fox News’ *Tucker Carlson Show*, Bannon’s *War Room* podcast and Alex Jones’ *InfoWars*

program.

CBS News reported in January 2017 that Kennedy, Jr. was in conversations with Trump to head up a commission on “Vaccination Safety and Scientific Integrity,” while the *Guardian* reported in February 2018 that Kennedy, Jr. had met “many times” with the Trump transition team.

- The Unity Project bills itself as a “non-partisan, nonprofit educational organization” that promotes a “children-first” agenda. Nothing could be further from the truth. The group previously listed the Greater Laguna Beach Republican Party as a “partner organization,” and the group’s leaders include Tiffany Justice and Mari Barke.

Justice is the co-founder of “Moms for Liberty,” a conservative group with close ties to the Republican Party. In an October 2021 *Washington Post* article, Christian Ziegler, vice chairman of the Florida Republican Party and a Sarasota County commissioner, credited Moms for Liberty with “bringing new voters to the GOP.”

Ziegler, whose wife is also affiliated with Moms for Liberty, said he expects members of the group will become “foot soldiers” for Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in the 2022 gubernatorial election.

Barke is the president of the Orange County, California Board of Education. She was elected in 2018 on a pro-charter school agenda. In 2016, she served as a Republican elector and, according to her LinkedIn profile, was the “California endorsement director” for “Donald J. Trump for President.”



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