

US COVID-19 policy: “Social murder” of older Americans

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The third year of the COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end, leaving a horrifying death toll in its wake. Despite US President Joe Biden’s declaration this year that “the pandemic is over,” COVID-19 killed more than 250,000 Americans in 2022, a figure multiple times higher than the US battlefield deaths in any single year of World War I or World War II. And with cases and hospitalizations surging, the death toll will only rise.

Of this year’s US victims of COVID-19, three-quarters, or 185,436 people, were over the age of 65. In the last week reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this figure rose to 92 percent.

The implementation of a policy that accepts and even promotes mass death among a physically vulnerable section of the population has no modern precedent in a country claiming to be democratic. The dismantling of serious and systematic public health measures to stop the spread of Covid is viewed by powerful sections of the ruling class as an effective means of reducing the societal “burden” of caring for large numbers of elderly people.

In effect, the Biden administration and the governments of the wealthiest capitalist countries throughout the world have adopted an officially unstated but none the less deliberate policy of social murder, which targets the elderly. It amounts to a form of homicidal eugenics, reminiscent of the Nazi regime’s policy of murdering handicapped people.

Nearly one year ago, the Biden administration called for a “new normal” of “living with” COVID-19. During the surge of the Omicron variant, which the Biden administration declared to be “mild,” the White House called for the systematic dismantling of all remaining measures to stop the spread of the disease.

The CDC called for the reduction of quarantine for those with COVID-19 to five days, encouraged states to end daily COVID-19 reporting, denigrated PCR testing and discouraged masking. The entire system of contact tracing in the United States has been dismantled.

These policies, warned scientists and advocates for the disabled and retirees, would lead to mass deaths among the elderly, as social distancing became practically impossible and the virus spread uncontrollably.

It quickly became clear that this was the intended outcome. The “new normal” of the pandemic is to include a substantially higher death rate for older Americans indefinitely.

In an interview on January 10, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said that the COVID-19 death toll had an “encouraging” component: The disease was predominantly killing those who were disabled, ill and elderly.

“The overwhelming number of deaths—over 75 percent—occurred in people who had at least four comorbidities, so really these are people who were unwell to begin with—and, yes, really encouraging news in the context of Omicron,” Walensky said.

When the CDC director made those remarks, the share of those 65 and older among those dying each week from COVID-19 stood at 68 percent, compared to 92 percent today.

The White House’s dismantling of all remaining COVID-19 protections has made it increasingly impossible for vulnerable people to avoid infection.

In care homes and hospitals, providers and other workers with active COVID-19 infections have been encouraged, and, in many cases, forced to come to work, spreading the disease to vast swaths of the population, including the most vulnerable.

The pronouncement in January by Dr. Anthony Fauci that “just about everybody” will get COVID-19 was less an analysis of the nature of the virus than of the consequences of the administration’s policies, and, thus, a statement of intent.

The mastermind of the Biden administration’s plan for a “new normal” was Ezekiel Emanuel, the author of the notorious 2014 article, “Why I hope to die at 75,” in which he declared that “society... will be better off if nature takes its course swiftly and promptly.”

Emanuel and other members of Biden’s COVID-19 advisory panel published a series of articles in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) calling for a “new normal” of life with COVID-19 that would end measures to count cases and track infections.

In an interview on NBC, Emanuel said, “We can continue with our normal life while COVID is around, just like we do with the flu.”

The plan was greeted with front-page coverage in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Not one of the reports noted

the fact that Emanuel, the architect of the “new normal” plan, was also a leading advocate of reducing life expectancy.

In an August 21, 2019 interview with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Emanuel explained why he does not believe older Americans are valuable members of society. The central question, he said, was “whether our consumption is worth our contribution.”

Emanuel continued:

These people who live a vigorous life to 70, 80, 90 years of age—when I look at what those people “do,” almost all of it is what I classify as play. It’s not meaningful work. They’re riding motorcycles; they’re hiking. Which can all have value—don’t get me wrong. But if it’s the main thing in your life? Ummm, that’s not probably a meaningful life.

In other words, people should only live as long as they work—that is, generate corporate profits. To the extent that people do not work, they are a drain on society, and it would be best if they died as soon as possible.

Emanuel’s argument is antithetical to the entire tradition of American democracy and Enlightenment thought, which in the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” is, in fact, the only “meaningful” aim of society. Thomas Jefferson famously proclaimed that “The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government.”

But Emanuel’s abhorrent argument is false even on its own merits. Older people who do not “work” contribute vastly to society by teaching, caring for and nurturing children, by bringing the experience, skills and wisdom of the past to bear in the present, and by enriching the lives of their loved ones.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained at the time, this argument was fundamentally identical to that of both the American eugenics movement and the Nazi euthanasia program, which argued that killing one disabled person would free up resources for an entire “healthy” family.

The eugenicists’ arguments are always framed in terms of the needs of “society.” In truth, they express the selfish and predatory interests of the capitalist class. The less money that is spent on providing for retirees and the ill, the more can be funneled directly into the profits of the financial oligarchy that dominates society.

There is another, equally critical aim in the campaign to cull the elderly. For years, US military strategists have demanded the reduction of US life expectancy as a means to slash spending on the federal entitlement programs Medicare and Medicaid.

A 2013 paper by Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) presented the

increasing longevity of ordinary Americans as a major strategic problem for US capitalism.

“The US does not face any foreign threat as serious as its failure to come to grips with... the rise in the cost of federal entitlement spending,” Cordesman wrote. This, he said, is driven “almost exclusively by the rise in federal spending on major health care programs, Social Security, and the cost of net interest on the debt.”

As the Biden administration increasingly declares that its greatest focus is to “win” the “competition for the 21st century,” supporting the elderly is more and more seen as an impediment to the funneling of social resources to war preparations.

The oligarchs who dominate society declare that they have no money to pay for the promises made to workers under the New Deal and Great Society, which promoted the idea that if people work, they will live out their lives after retirement in peace, security and happiness.

The oligarchs claim poverty as they gorge themselves, with three billionaires controlling as much wealth as the bottom half of the world’s population.

The parasites who control American society proclaim that society cannot afford to let its members live in peace, happiness and security. In reality, it is society that cannot afford the oligarchs.

Despite the ravages of the capitalist mass infection policy, COVID-19 remains a preventable disease. Through the rigorous application of mass testing, quarantining and contact tracing, the transmission of the disease can be stopped and it can be eliminated and eradicated.

Ending the scourge of COVID-19 will mean a frontal assault on the wealth and privilege of the financial oligarchy and ending the capitalist social order that hideously enriches the few and kills the many.



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