

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the ruling class' return to Social Darwinism

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This is the report delivered by Evan Blake to the 2023 International May Day Online Rally held on April 30. Blake is the Coordinator of the WSWs Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic. To view all speeches, visit wsws.org/mayday.

We are now in the 4th year of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's May Day rally takes place amid a massive worldwide propaganda campaign aimed at falsely portraying the pandemic as over.

In the US, this campaign has reached a critical turning point. On April 1st, expanded access to Medicaid due to the pandemic was cut off. On April 10th, US President Joe Biden officially ended the COVID-19 national emergency declaration. And on May 11th, the public health emergency declaration will expire.

As a result of these three measures, all government response to the pandemic will be privatized, including the future distribution of COVID vaccines, tests and treatments. Upwards of 20 million Americans could lose healthcare coverage in the coming year, including possibly over 1 million who are suffering from Long COVID.

These same processes are unfolding internationally. Every mitigation measure that slows the spread of COVID has been fully lifted, including even mask mandates in hospitals.

All claims that the pandemic is over are predicated on lies and misinformation. The reality is that throughout the world there is ongoing mass infection, death, and debilitation with Long COVID.

Due to the dismantling of COVID testing and data reporting globally, one can now only roughly estimate the scale of the pandemic by looking at wastewater and excess deaths. Wherever wastewater tracking is done, it shows that the real state of viral transmission continues

to be high.

The coronavirus continues to mutate and evolve into new and potentially more dangerous variants. As we meet today, another surge of the pandemic is underway in India due to the Omicron XBB.1.16 subvariant, which is quickly becoming dominant in a growing number of countries.

Global excess deaths due to the pandemic remain above 10,000 per day. These include acute COVID deaths, as well as elevated rates of heart attacks, strokes, and other adverse events associated with COVID infection and the collapse of the healthcare system. *Twenty-two million people* have now died globally due to the pandemic, with 1 million more dying every three months.

Furthermore, the "mass disabling event" of Long COVID deepens each day. A recent comprehensive study of Long COVID conservatively estimated that at least 65 million people are now suffering from this affliction globally. The real figure could be far higher, in the hundreds of millions.

It must be stressed that there is nothing comparable to this scale of mass debilitation in human history. Yet this immense danger goes almost entirely unmentioned in the corporate media.

The pandemic has irreversibly changed global society, leaving behind social scars and emotional trauma for billions of people internationally. But the capitalist ruling elites are totally indifferent to this suffering of the population.

In January, speaking at a conference of city mayors, Biden made an offhand comment on the COVID death toll in the US, stating bluntly, "I sometimes underestimate it because I stopped thinking about it."

What contempt for the families and loved ones of the over 1.1 million Americans who have died of COVID!

The ruling elites are declaring the pandemic over because they want people to forget the massive, ongoing social crimes for which they are responsible.

But the *World Socialist Web Site*, the voice of the international working class, has not and will not forget. While every other outlet and political party ignores the pandemic, we continue to cover its impact throughout the world.

We are deepening the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic, which we initiated in November 2021. This remains the only independent investigation into the criminal pandemic policies that have been implemented globally.

Over the past winter, one of the greatest crimes of the pandemic took place with the lifting of the Zero-COVID elimination policy in China. Estimates place the death toll at somewhere from 1-2 million people in the span of just three months, a scale of time-concentrated mass death not seen since World War II.

The Chinese Communist Party—the political organization of the newly minted ruling class that emerged out of the restoration of capitalism—bears full responsibility for this social catastrophe. But the Western imperialist powers and their corporate media are also deeply implicated in this crime, as are the pseudo-left middle class organizations and publications that demanded the lifting of Zero-COVID despite scientific projections that this would kill over 1 million people.

Instead of stopping the pandemic, the bourgeoisie has utilized it to carry out the greatest transfer of wealth in world history and to deepen their decades-long social counterrevolution against the working class.

Prior gains in life expectancy won through the development of public health are being reversed, anti-vaccine pseudoscience has become mainstream, and diseases previously kept in check are on the rise.

At the same time, the ruling classes are resurrecting the most reactionary ideologies of their past, including the eugenicist and Social Darwinist conceptions which dominated in ruling circles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

“Survival of the fittest” is once again their mantra, with the elderly and immunocompromised left to fend for themselves. Rosa Luxemburg’s famous dictum, that the working class confronts either socialism or barbarism, is evermore true each day.

The ICFI is the only political party in the world that has opposed the descent into barbarism embodied in the capitalist response to the pandemic. From the beginning, we have continuously called for a global elimination strategy to stop the pandemic once and for all.

Fundamentally, this is rooted in our defense of Trotskyism and the Theory of Permanent Revolution. Analyzing the development of world capitalism in the early 20th century, the great Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky stressed that in the imperialist epoch even basic democratic tasks—which includes the protection of the health of the people—cannot be carried out under capitalism. This falls to the working class, which in the course of its struggles is compelled to carry out socialist measures and to coordinate its struggles internationally.

Today, this same theory can be applied to the pandemic, as public health programs and principles first developed in an earlier historical period by the bourgeoisie now face unrelenting attack by capitalist governments. Only a global movement of the working class, fighting for world socialist revolution, can implement the policies necessary to stop the spread of COVID and many other diseases, and prevent future pandemics which scientists warn are increasingly likely in the coming years.

The same is true for every social problem confronting mankind. War, climate change, poverty, the threat of fascism, are all global problems which can only be resolved with a revolutionary socialist program aimed at rebuilding global society based on the principles of social equality and economic planning. The International Committee of the Fourth International is fighting for this strategy, and I urge you to join this movement today.



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