

“Millions of lives are now at risk”

WSWS reporter Evan Blake interviewed on Trump’s fascist attacks on science

Our reporters
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On Monday, *World Socialist Web Site* reporter Evan Blake was interviewed by Rebecca Myles, News Director for WBAI Pacifica Radio, on her program “Frontline Voices.” The conversation focused on Blake’s recent WSWS Perspective, “The historic significance of Trump’s fascist assault on science,” and explored the Trump administration’s sweeping attacks on public health, scientific research and democratic rights in the United States.

Myles began by asking Blake to clarify the fascist character of the Trump administration and its comparison to historical examples of fascism. Blake responded by grounding his analysis in the Marxist and Trotskyist tradition.

He argued that the American ruling class is facing a profound economic, social and political crisis, and that “sections of the ruling class are very openly turning towards fascism and seeking to create a dictatorship in this country.”

However, Blake emphasized a key difference between the current situation in the US and the rise of fascism in 1930s Europe: “The American working class and the international working class are not entering this situation from a position of historic defeats, but really of a growing radicalization and a determination to struggle.” He cited the mass demonstrations involving millions across the US on April 5 as evidence of this growing opposition.

Turning to the core of his article, Myles asked Blake to elaborate on his characterization of the Trump administration as “social vandals” and to explain how the elimination of scientific and public health programs threatens to reduce the working class to conditions akin to “slavery.”

Blake described the April 1 mass firings as a “total counterrevolution, really gutting all of the core public

health agencies which exist in the United States.” He detailed that over 10,000 federal public health workers were fired, with another 10,000 laid off, amounting to roughly a quarter of all positions.

“They’ve basically destroyed the majority of their functioning, including, critically, NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health—over 80 percent of the employees were fired there,” Blake explained. He stressed that NIOSH is responsible for maintaining workplace safety, monitoring chemical exposure, and testing protective equipment, all of which are essential for workers’ health and safety.

Blake also highlighted the elimination of the CDC’s Chronic Disease Prevention agency, the HIV Prevention Division, and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, among others. He argued, “They’re trying to essentially turn back the clock on history, and return the working class to the conditions of industrial slavery at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, or earlier. They aim to destroy all of the key gains won through scientific discovery, going back to the Enlightenment.”

Myles asked Blake to draw out the implications of these cuts for the ongoing spread of H5N1 “bird flu.” Blake warned that figures like Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and USDA head Brooke Rollins have floated the idea of letting bird flu “just rip through poultry farms,” a policy he called “insane on the face of it, which has been widely denounced by scientists.”

Blake explained that such a policy would “basically give the virus millions of hosts in which it could evolve,” increasing the risk of a mutation that could enable human-to-human transmission and spark a new pandemic.

Myles then asked Blake to reflect on how the United States became the global center for scientific research and innovation after World War II, and what is at stake with

the current assault on science. Blake traced this history to the “brain drain” of scientists fleeing fascism in Europe, which brought figures like Albert Einstein and Enrico Fermi to the US. He described how the postwar synergy between the federal government and academia led to landmark achievements such as the mass production of penicillin, vaccines for polio and HPV, treatments for HIV/AIDS and cancer, the Human Genome Project and the revolution in computing technologies.

However, Blake warned that the current attacks mark a dramatic reversal: “Just in the past three months, under Trump and Kennedy, we’re seeing the beginnings of a new brain drain. There’s a poll which we cite in the article, which found that 75 percent of scientists in the US are considering leaving the country because the conditions are getting so bad so rapidly.”

Myles also asked about the consequences of the US pulling out of the World Health Organization (WHO) and cutting international health programs. Blake stressed that these moves have global ramifications: “The CDC, the NIH, all of these agencies, which for decades were seen as the standard bearer for public health and for science, can no longer collaborate with the WHO.” He warned that in the event of a new pandemic, “countries throughout the world would be completely left in the dark.”

Blake also highlighted the impact of cutting the PEPFAR program, which provides HIV/AIDS treatment to millions in low-income countries: “Tens of millions of people throughout the world will now be denied access to these treatments. The lives of millions of people are now at risk.”

Blake concluded by linking the current crisis to the bipartisan normalization of mass infection during the COVID-19 pandemic, which only accelerated under the Biden administration, arguing that the defense of science and public health cannot be entrusted to the Democratic Party.



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