



Speak Out Now

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A Return to Whose Normal?

Across the country, Democrats, Republicans and the media are all hurrying to declare that the pandemic is ending, and that it's time to return to normal. They've decided that it is time to take all the masks off, get the profits flowing again, and accept that everything is back to normal.

Meanwhile, the official U.S. death toll for the two-year Covid pandemic will soon reach one million people, with an average of about 40,000 people dying each month. About 140,000 children in the U.S. have lost an adult family member. One out of every 100 people over 65 have died from this virus. Just last month, there were over 60,000 Covid deaths. Are we really expected to accept that everything is normal, that nearly six million deaths worldwide is normal?

If you are among the millions of people who are disabled, immunocompromised, or have chronic illness, then a return to normal means your life is still at risk. Normal means that the lives of the most vulnerable remain disposable, that poor people and people of color have worse health outcomes, die at higher rates, and have restricted access to necessary treatment.

The normal they want us to rush back to is nothing but the day-to-day functioning of their system, one that places the accumulation of wealth above all else. It is the normal functioning of a system that is based on exploitation and inequality, where the lives of most people have little value except as a means to squeeze profit from.

Under their system, it is normal for the richest 1% of the population to have as much wealth as the bottom 90%. It's supposed to be normal when, during a pandemic, the richest ten people in the world are able to double their wealth while the bottom 99% of humanity becomes worse off.

For them it's normal to see their profits increase while the cost of living skyrockets for the rest of us, and our wages don't keep up. It's normal for millions of people to fall into medical debt as a result of getting sick during a pandemic. It's normal for drug companies to make billions of dollars as they deny hundreds of millions of people around the world access to necessary vaccines.

This is their normal system at work, a system where it is normal to spend nearly \$800 billion on the military but doesn't guarantee healthcare for everyone. This is a system that guards the privileges of the rich who hide trillions of dollars in offshore accounts but refuses to provide people with decent housing, that continues to close down schools, and doesn't promise every child access to a daily meal.

Who wants to rush back to a normal where over two million people are locked up behind bars, where whole communities are ripped apart by poverty, unemployment, and drug addiction? For this system, it's normal when Black people are gunned down by law enforcement, when women face an epidemic of violence, when LGBTQ people face regular discrimination and physical harm.

For this system it is normal to destroy the environment, decimating entire regions of the planet, and demolishing whole neighborhoods with extreme weather events, fires and flooding. It's normal when our power and water is shut off due to freezing temperatures. It's normal when energy companies tear up more of the earth to extract fossil fuels. And for this system, it's now supposed to be normal for humanity to be threatened with extinction.

This is what's normal for their capitalist system, where normal has been the problem to begin with. Whether we accept a return to this normal or strive to bring about a new one will be up to us.