

The Comorbidities of Capitalism

04-23-2021

A person is hospitalized because of a serious medical issue. In evaluating the patient's condition that needs treatment physicians often discover a host of other health abnormalities, that while not judged to be an immediate threat to life in themselves, do increase chances of death when combined with a crisis that required hospitalization.

Comorbidities such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, use of medication for the treatment of those and other health problems are what in most cases makes a Covid 19 infection fatal. Using the medical model for America's chronic social, political, environmental and economic crises, what might be the 'comorbidities' that prevents their solution, that is, what might it be besides capitalism itself?

From 2003 to the advent of Covid-19 America has experienced over and above 4 million excess deaths compared to other advanced nations. Relative life expectancy between those years is down 1.3 years even though we have a younger population now and life expectancy should be longer. Relative to other like nations it's down 2 years. 350 to 450 thousand Americans are suicides every year.

What was once known as prosperity died in 1970's stagflation. There was a massive loss of jobs to technology and cheaper foreign labor. That trend continues; between 2001 and 2010 6 million manufacturing jobs were lost. Meanwhile the markets of the unreal economy have broken all records while at the same time departed from all but the slimest connection to the real economy. Billions are made by the 10% of the population that owns 80% of stocks and securities.

Whatever slow growth that we've had the last 40 years all went to the top 10% while real wages for the 90% declined. For them that meant massive borrowing to maintain accustomed living conditions. Former pleasures became clouded with concern over losing all to debt collectors.

Perhaps the singular comorbidity for increasing the risk of death for those that contract the virus is obesity. Unlike third world poor countries where the poor lack adequate food sources to keep their weight much above emaciation, the low income has plenty of sources of cheap pleasure in fast, fatty, but tasty, junk foods. They are in a physical condition that makes them prime candidates for death along with those that kill the pain with drugs and alcohol.

It should come as no surprise that a system in such a late stage of disintegration is imprinting its state in the minds and bodies of those at the bottom, the working class and the poor. The comorbidity is the system that made the disease by its greed, and the only cure is a new, revolutionary, political vaccine.

<http://unrealeconomy.org>