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Mr. Lee's Commentary and Dairy



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Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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More than 240 pro-migrant groups urge Biden to end Trump-era border policies



WASHINGTON, Dec 17 (Reuters) - More than 240 pro-migrant organizations urged President Joe Biden on Friday to terminate two border policies that block or reduce access to asylum in the United States, saying the policies violate U.S. law and international treaty obligations.

Biden, a Democrat, came into office in January promising to roll back the hardline immigration legacy of his Republican predecessor former President Donald Trump, but advocates - many who supported his candidacy - have grown frustrated with the slow pace of reform.

In a letter addressed to Biden and other top officials, the groups called the policies "illegal."

While Biden tried to end one of the policies, known as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), a federal judge ordered its reinstatement in response to a lawsuit. But advocates criticized the administration for then expanding the MPP program to apply to all migrants from the Western Hemisphere when it restarted in early December. Under the MPP program, non-Mexican asylum seekers caught at the U.S.-Mexico border can be sent to Mexico to await U.S. court dates, potentially facing kidnappings and other harms in dangerous border towns.

In restarting MPP, the administration said it would add new humanitarian protections, like health screenings, access to COVID-19 vaccines and lawyers. But a report released on Thursday by the advocacy group Human Rights First said those promises had not materialized.

The organization interviewed 16 returned migrants and found most said they were never informed of their right to speak with a lawyer while in U.S. custody. The report also said U.S. officials had not adequately screened migrants for health vulnerabilities that might allow them to remain in the United States, among other criticisms.

A White House spokesperson said the administration was required to comply with the court-ordered restart "in good faith" and still disagreed with the policy.

As of Thursday, 161 migrants had been returned to Mexico since the MPP restart, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). All returns took place in Ciudad Juarez, across the border from El Paso, Texas.

The other Trump policy left in place by Biden and criticized by the groups is known as Title 42. It allows U.S. authorities to rapidly expel migrants caught at U.S. border during the

COVID-19 pandemic without giving them a chance to seek asylum.

The White House has deferred questions about policy to the U.S. Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which implemented it in March 2020.



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

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The Success Story Of Carmax



Carmax is a used car retailer that opened in September of 1993 in Richmond, Virginia. Today they have more than 225 locations all over the United States. It operates two business concepts: Carmax Sales Operations and Carmax Auto Finance. The corporate entity behind the formation of

Carmax was Circuit City Inc. Carmax acquired its first new car franchise with Chrysler and later with Toyota, but they sold it to another dealer and now just sells used cars.

When you walk into the tall office building of Carmax, they always have a very friendly

receptionist that greets you. After you turn over your car key to them, about one-half hour later the sales people will hand you the appraisal paper to see if you agree with the price. If you agree, within another half hour you will get the check and the deal is done. This kind of fast and friendly business

model really makes people happy. This is one of the reasons Carmax has become the number one used car dealership.

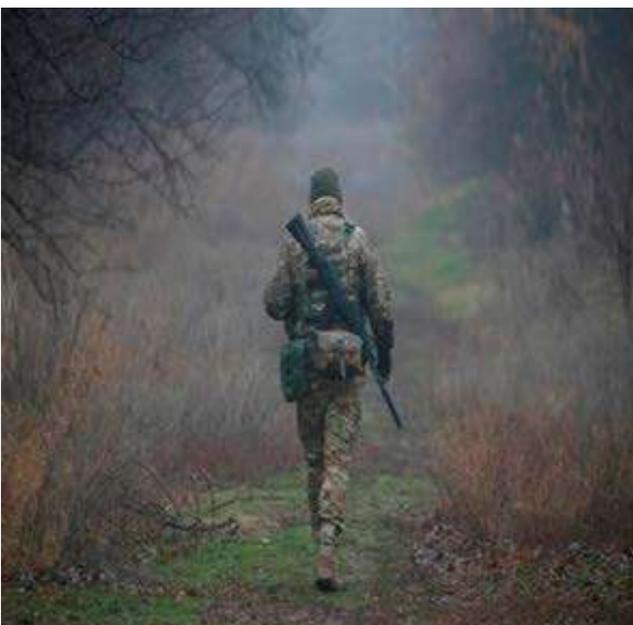
When I studied at Harvard, I wrote a book titled, "An Eye On The World From

Harvard," and it is still listed on Amazon. I did twelve case studies and discovered one key ingredient for successful companies is that they have the right market at the right time. Carmax is one good example of this.



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Editor's Choice



A Ukrainian serviceman is seen on the front line near the village of Travneve in Donetsk region, Ukraine, December 15, 2021. REUTERS/Gleb Garanich



Ukrainian service members walk on the front line at the industrial zone of government-held town of Avdiivka in Donetsk region, Ukraine December 17, 2021. REUTERS/Oleksandr Klymenko



A Ukrainian service member walks on the front line in Avdiivka in Donetsk region, Ukraine December 17, 2021. REUTERS/Oleksandr Klymenko



A protester confronts riot police officers during a demonstration against France's restrictions, including compulsory health passes, to fight the coronavirus pandemic, in Paris, France, September 11, 2021. REUTERS/Benoit Tessier

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Hispanics Are Dying At The Highest Rate

United States COVID-19 Deaths Now At 800,000



A portion of a mural, which displays images of people who have died of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), is seen in Joni Zavitsanos' art studio in Houston, Texas, as the country reaches 600,000 deaths. (Photo credit/REUTERS/Callaghan O'Hare.)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Jerry Ramos spent his final days in a California hospital, hooked to an oxygen machine with blood clots in his lungs from COVID-19, his 3-year-old daughter in his thoughts.

"I have to be here to watch my princess grow up," the Mexican American restaurant worker wrote on Facebook. "My heart feels broken into pieces." Ramos didn't live to see it. He died Feb. 15 at age 32, becoming not just one of the nearly 800,000 Americans who have now perished in the coronavirus outbreak but another example of the outbreak's strikingly uneven and ever-shifting toll on the nation's racial and ethnic groups.

The New 800,000 mark, as tracked by Johns Hopkins University, is greater than the population of Baltimore or Milwaukee. It is about equal to the number of Americans who died of cancer in 2019. And as bad as that is, the true toll is believed to be significantly higher. Last summer, during a second surge, Hispanics were hit the hardest, suffering an outside share of deaths, driven by infections in Texas and Florida. By winter, during the third and most lethal stage, the virus had gripped the entire nation, and racial gaps in weekly death rates had

narrowed so much that whites were the worst off, followed closely by Hispanics.

Whites were the worst off, followed closely by Hispanics.



FILE - In this July 11, 2020, file photo, mourners carry out the remains of loved ones following the blessing of the ashes of Mexicans who died from COVID-19 at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Government health officials say Native Americans, Latinos and Black people are two to three times more likely than whites to die of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Eduardo Munoz Alvarez, File)

President Joe Biden acknowledged the milestone Monday during his visit to Europe, saying that while

new cases and deaths are dropping dramatically in the U.S., "there's still too many lives being lost," and "now is not the time to let our guard down."

On the way to the latest round-number milestone, the virus has proved adept at exploiting inequalities in the U.S., according to an Associated Press data analysis.

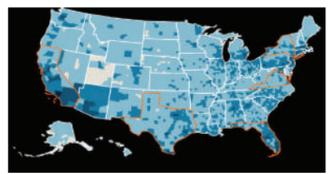
In the first wave of fatalities, in April 2020, Black people were slammed, dying at rates higher than those of other ethnic or racial groups as the virus rampaged through the urban Northeast and heavily African American cities like Detroit and New Orleans.

Now, even as the outbreak ebbs and more people get vaccinated, a racial gap appears to be emerging again, with Black Americans dying at higher rates than other groups.

Overall, Black and Hispanic Americans have less access to medical care and are in poorer health, with higher rates of conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. They are also more likely to have jobs deemed essential, less able to work from home and more likely to live in crowded, multigenerational households, where working family members are apt to expose others to the virus.

Milestones Crossed In U.S. COVID-19 Deaths

Cumulative deaths in the U.S. through the week ending: June 13, 2021 100,000200,000300,000400,000500,000



NOTE: Weekly counts end on Sunday. The count for the most recent week will not be complete until Sunday. In Utah only the larger-population counties are reporting confirmed deaths; smaller counties are banded together into county groups; those counties are not shown in this map. Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE (AP Photo Credit: NICKY FORSTER AND PHIL HOLM)

Black people account for 15% of all COVID-19 deaths where race is known, while Hispanics represent 19%, whites 61% and Asian Americans 4%. Those figures are close to the groups' share of the U.S. population — Black people at 12%, Hispanics 18%, whites 60% and Asians 6% — but adjusting for age yields a clearer picture of the unequal burden.

Because Blacks and Hispanics are younger on average than whites, it would stand to reason that they would be less likely to die from a disease that has been brutal to the elderly.



In this April 22, 2020, file photo, pallbearers, who were among only 10 allowed mourners, walk the casket for interment at the funeral for Larry Hammond, who died from the coronavirus, at Mount Olivet Cemetery in New Orleans. Government health officials say Native Americans, Latinos and Black people are two to three times more likely than whites to die of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert, File)

But that's not what is happening. Instead, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adjusting for population age differences, estimates that Native Americans, Latinos and Blacks are two to three times more likely than white people to die of COVID-19. Also, the AP analysis found that Latinos are dying at much younger ages than other groups. Thirty-seven percent of Hispanic deaths were of those under 65, versus 12% for white Americans and 30% for Black people. Hispanic people between 30 and 39 — like Ramos — have died at five times the rate of white people in the same age group. Public health experts see these disparities as a loud message that the nation needs to address deep-rooted inequities.

"If we want to respect the dear price that 600,000 people have paid, don't return to normal. Return to something that is better than what was," said Dr. Clyde Yancy, vice dean for diversity and inclusion at Northwestern University's medical school in Chicago.

He added: "It will be an epic fail if we simply go back to whatever we call normal."



Yolanda Ogbolu, a nurse researcher at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, who advocated for two relatives during their COVID-19 hospital stays, looks out a window at the university's nursing school on Friday, June 11, 2021, in Baltimore. (AP Photo/Steve Ruark)

Yolanda Ogbolu, who is Black, made herself an advocate for two relatives during their COVID-19 hospital

stays: her 50-year-old police officer brother — she persuaded his doctors to treat him with the drug remdesivir — and her 59-year-old repairman uncle. She called the hospital daily during his 100-day stay. Both survived. But Ogbolu wonders whether they would have lived if they hadn't had a nurse in the family.

"What happens when people don't have that person to push for them? What happens when you don't even speak the language?" Ogbolu said. "What happens when they don't know how to navigate the health system or what questions to ask?"

Ramos had asthma and diabetes and had quit his job as a chef at Red Lobster before the pandemic because of diabetes-related trouble with his feet.

He died during the devastating winter surge that hit Latinos hard, and the rest of his household of seven in Watsonville, an agricultural city of around 54,000 people about 90 miles south of San Francisco, also got sick.



Laura Ramos holds a photo of her brother Jerry Ramos at her home in Watsonville, Calif., Sunday, June 6, 2021. He died Feb. 15 at age 32, becoming not just one of the roughly 600,000 Americans who have now perished in the outbreak but another example of the virus's strikingly uneven and ever-shifting toll on the nation's racial and ethnic groups. (AP Photo/Nic Coury)

That included his toddler daughter, the family matriarch, 70-year-old Mercedes Ramos; and his girlfriend, who was the only one in the household working and the first to get infected,

bringing home the virus from her job managing a marijuana dispensary, according to family members. Mother and son were admitted to the same hospital, their rooms nearby. They would video chat or call each other every day.

"He would tell me he loved me very much and that he wanted me to get better and that he was doing fine, but he was telling me that so I wouldn't worry," Mercedes Ramos said in Spanish, her voice breaking. She has since returned to her job picking strawberries.

Gaps in vaccination rates in the U.S. also persist, with Blacks and Hispanics lagging behind, said Samantha Artiga of the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonpartisan health-policy research organization.

(Continued On Page C7-2)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

(Continued from page C7-1)

Hispanics Are Dying At The Highest Rate

United States COVID-19 Deaths Now At 800,000



A memorial for Jerry Ramos sits at his home in Watsonville, Calif., Sunday, June 6, 2021. (AP Photo/Nic Coury)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Experts say several factors could be at work, including deep distrust of the medical establishment among Black Americans because of a history of discriminatory treatment, and fears of deportation among Latinos, as well as a language barrier in many cases.

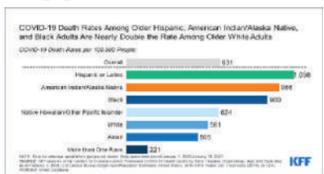
The U.S. was averaging about 870,000 injections per day in early June, down sharply from a high of about 3.3 million a day on average in mid-April, according to the CDC.

Initial vaccine eligibility policies, set by states, favored older Americans, a group more likely to be white. Now, everyone over 12 is eligible, but obstacles remain, such as concerns about missing work because of side effects from the shot.

"Eligibility certainly does not equal access," Artiga said. "Losing a day or two of wages can have real consequences for your family. People are facing tough decisions like that."

The AP's analysis of the outbreak's racial and ethnic patterns was based on National Center for Health Statistics data on COVID-19 deaths and 2019 Census Bu-

reau population estimates.



It's less clear who is dying now, but the still-incomplete data suggests a gap has emerged again. In Michigan, Black people are 14% of the population but accounted for 25% of the 1,064 deaths reported in the past four weeks, according to the most recent available state data. Similar gaps were seen in Florida and Pennsylvania.

"For people of color like myself, we've had deep personal experiences during the pandemic" of caring for loved ones and sometimes losing them, said Yolanda Ogbolu, a nurse researcher at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. (Courtesy <https://apnews.com/>)

Related 600,000 Painful U.S. COVID-19 deaths Leave a Swath Of Misery

Across The Country

The United States has now lost over 600,000 mothers, fathers, children, siblings and friends to COVID-19, a painful reminder that death, sickness and grief continue even as the country begins to return to something resembling pre-pandemic normal.

A bride forced by the pandemic to have a Zoom wedding is planning a lavish in-person anniversary celebration this summer, but all of the guests must attest they are vaccinated.

A Houston artist, still deep in grief, is working on a collage of images of people who died in her community. Others crowd theaters and bars, saying it is time to move on.

"There will be no tears - not even happy tears," said Ali Whitman, who will celebrate her first wedding anniversary in August by donning her gown and partying with 240 vaccinated friends and family members in New Hampshire.

COVID-19 nearly killed her mother. She spent her wedding day last year with 13 people in person while an aunt conducted the ceremony via Zoom.

"I would be remiss not to address how awful and how terrible the past year has been, but also the gratitude that I can be in a singular place with all the people in my life who mean so much to me," said Whitman, 30.

The United States passed 600,000 COVID-19 deaths on Monday, about 15% of the world's total coronavirus fatalities of around 4 million, a Reuters tally shows.

@reuters

As death rate slows, U.S. exceeds 600,000 COVID-19 fatalities <http://reut.rs/2TqZMHE>



The rate of severe illness and death has dropped dramatically as more Americans have become vaccinated, creating something of a psychological whiplash that

plagues the millions whose lives have been touched by the disease. Many are eager to emerge from more than a year of sickness and lockdown, yet they still suffer - from grief, lingering symptoms, economic trauma or the isolation of lockdown.

"We've all lived through this awful time, and all of us have been affected one way or another," said Erika Stein, who has suffered from migraines, fatigue and cognitive issues since contracting COVID-19 last fall. "My world flipped upside down in the last year and a half - and that's been hard."

Stein, 34, was active and fit, working as a marketing executive and fitness instructor in Virginia outside Washington, D.C., before the initial illness and related syndrome known as long-COVID ravaged her life.

Like many, she has mixed feelings about how quickly cities and states have moved to lift pandemic restrictions and re-open.



'FOR MY FAMILY, THERE IS NO NORMAL'

In New York, social worker Shyvonne Noboa still cries talking about the disease that ravaged her family, infecting 14 out of 17 relatives and killing her beloved grandfather.

She breaks down when she goes to Target and sees the well-stocked aisles, recalling the pandemic's depths, when she could not find hand sanitizer to protect her family.

"New York City is going back to quote-unquote 'normal' and opening up, but I can assure you that for my family there is no normal," said Noboa, who lives in Queens, an early epicenter of the U.S. outbreak. She is vaccinated but still wears a mask when she is out, and plans to continue doing so in the near future.

In Houston, artist Joni Zavitsanos started looking up obituaries of people in Southeast Texas who had died in the pandem-

ic's early days, reading their stories and creating mixed-media memorials displaying their names and photographs. Around each person she painted a halo using gold leaf, an homage to the Byzantine art of the Greek Orthodox church she attends.

Zavitsanos has now created about 575 images, and plans to keep going, making as many as she can, each portrait on an eight-by-eight-inch piece of wood to be mounted together to form an installation. Her brother and three adult children contracted COVID-19 and recovered. A very close friend nearly died and is still struggling with rehabilitation.



Chris Kocher, who founded the support and advocacy group COVID Survivors for Change, urged sympathy and support for people who are still grieving.

"We're being given this false choice where you can open up and celebrate, or you need to be locked down in grief," he said. "Let's be thankful that people are getting vaccinated, but let's also acknowledge that going back to normal is not an option for millions of Americans." One way to acknowledge the toll that COVID-19 has taken is to incorporate the color yellow into celebrations and gatherings, or display a yellow heart, which for some has become a symbol of those lost to the disease, he said.

The bittersweet mix of grief at the pandemic's toll with relief brought by its ebb was clear at Chicago's O'Hare airport on Thursday, where Stephanie Aviles and her family waited for a cousin to arrive from Puerto Rico.

Aviles, 23, lost two close friends to the virus, and her father nearly died. And yet, here she was, greeting family she had not been able to see for 15 months as the pandemic raged.

"I'm grateful, but it's a lot," she said. "It's a strange feeling to be normal again." (Courtesy <https://www.reuters.com/world>)