

Wall Street Journal lies about Detroit vaccinations

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Drive-through mass vaccination center at Detroit's TCF Convention Center.

Detroit — The Wall Street Journal proudly admits it is a mouthpiece for capitalism. According to WSJ the private, for-profit sector is the best solution for the problems faced by the earth's human inhabitants.

Thus it is no surprise that an April 3 article about [Detroit's COVID-19 vaccination battle](#) would reflect this bias. The article's subhead asserts: "City's mostly Black residents largely aren't using the mass vaccination site at Ford Field, with many finding access difficult." It lies by telling only part of the story.

The common capitalist view of post-bankruptcy Detroit was that this proud, Black, working-class city had been forced into the dominant privatized capitalist model. Virtually every municipal asset was monetized or privatized to satisfy the banks and bondholders.

A Feb. 22 [Detroit News article](#) quotes Chief Deputy Financial Officer Tanya Stoudemire confirming that "the pension fund is the lone remaining asset creditors could go after."

The COVID-19 pandemic unmasked the fallacy of the for-profit private sector panacea, especially in its most dominant ideological center, the United States. The warp-speed vaccine rollout continued the indictment of neoliberal capitalism, as each state competed for resources, every county and town had its own testing, masking, education and vaccination responses to the pandemic, with this chaos resulting in unnecessary deaths and hardships.

In Baltimore, for example, people wanting the vaccine signed up at multiple registration sites, and showed up at vaccination sites at the end of the day hoping to get a leftover vaccine before it expired and was thrown away.

Instead of explaining what Detroit did correctly, the WSJ article presents the city as

yet another poster child for the failure of government; in this case the prominent Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Its reporter only examines the Michigan state vaccination center at Ford Field, home of the Detroit Lions football team, plus an individual pastor, as though that was the full picture.

This auxiliary regional vaccination center opened just weeks ago, on March 23, but its problems and demographics are used to falsely claim that Detroit's Black population, hard-hit in the early pandemic, is not being served. In fact, Detroit began drive-through mass vaccinations at the TCF Convention Center on January 14.

Coordinated government response

Looking at history, the current post-bankruptcy Detroit city administration would seem to be free market proponents. Mayor Mike Duggan, the first white, suburban mayor since the 1973 election of the widely revered Coleman A. Young, privatized the Detroit Medical Center — home of Detroit Receiving Hospital, formerly Detroit General.

Yet when the pandemic ravaged Detroit at the outset, killing Black elected officials, bus drivers and thousands of our loved ones in the first few months, the city administration organized a centralized response.

First, the administration gave in to a longstanding community campaign opposing shut-offs and demanding affordable water. It restored service to thousands of homes where service was denied for non-payment of unfair bills that were inflated to repay bonds. The city even worked with the Plumbers union to fix failed pipes in some homes.

Mass, centralized COVID-19 testing was organized. When the vaccine became available, mass vaccination began.

Weekly televised reports from the mayor, health officials and community

representatives addressed new measures to confront the virus and vaccinate Detroiters. The [Detroit COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard](#) provides the numbers and outlines the effort to reach the most vulnerable, the homeless, nursing homes and senior apartments, essential workers, first responders, teachers, Detroit residents and those who work here.

There are “good neighbor” vaccinations for people who drive eligible seniors to vaccination appointments, and \$2 rides for people who need them, including people with disabilities. Senior Saturdays vaccinated 500 people each week at each church designated across the city.

When the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was finally available, a new site opened at the Northwest Activity Center. All appointments are made through a well-staffed central phone number — not multiple websites.

Alongside the city’s effort, health plans at Henry Ford Health Systems and Beaumont Hospital also rolled out appointments for their clients, many of them also Detroiters.

It’s definitely not socialism. Yet Detroit does show that coordinated government response is necessary, even in a capitalist system, to begin to successfully confront the pandemic. It rebuffs the Wall Street Journal’s narrow article.

Detroit and Michigan elected officials are also aware of Cuba and its healthcare achievements, made with few material resources under a U.S. economic war. But they were constrained by the capitalist norms and fell back on them under the pressure of the crisis. Cuba’s life-saving tools that prevented infection and the death of health care workers were not considered.

National Nurses United just revealed that 3,200 health care workers in the U.S. have died of COVID-19.

Beginning last May 5, twelve U.S. City Councils and six labor councils, including the Washington State Labor Council, have passed resolutions calling for cooperation with Cuba to end the pandemic and to end the U.S. blockade. These actions by the Saving Lives Campaign — a joint project of the National Network on Cuba and the Canadian Network on Cuba — represent millions of U.S. residents who stand to benefit from Cuba's excellent medical and pharmaceutical advances.

International solidarity, not sanctions and blockades, are the key to improving lives right here at home.

