



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 17, 2020

Riding the COVID Wave, Non-citizen Flippy, at \$3 an Hour, to Replace White Castle Workers

Well, Flippy finally has a new job. It was March when I reported on the burger-flipping kitchen worker, who does his job dutifully, never goes home, doesn't get sick or take bathroom breaks and won't unionize — and can be had for \$3 an hour. He's also a non-citizen who doesn't need a visa and doesn't care if you have a beef with his taking your job. Flippy, you see, is a robot.



Buck Jordan, the chief executive of the company that birthed Flippy, Miso Robotics, had stated in February that the robot could appear widely in restaurants as soon as early 2021. But now it appears that the COVID-19 pandemic has improved Miso's fortunes further, as there's a desire to reduce worker contact with restaurant victuals. (While the chances of contracting the Wuhan coronavirus from food is low, there have been outbreaks affecting restaurant workers and patrons.)

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In fact, a major fast-food chain has announced its Flippy embrace. As Fox Business [reports](#):

White Castle announced a pilot program Tuesday to help cook burgers and fries using a robot named Flippy.

The fast-food chain and Miso ... have already been testing the robot's ability to cook White Castle's fried foods at one location. If the pilot is successful, White Castle may "hire" Flippy at more locations.

... Flippy is capable of cooking food, cleaning appliances, switching kitchenware or appliances, timing its procedures, recognizing and monitoring items, working up to 10,000 continuous hours and taking orders and training tips from staff.

Short video below of Flippy in White Castle action.

Flippy's early versions had already "put in time on the line at Dodger Stadium and at locations of CaliBurger, a small quick-serve chain that Jordan says also functions as 'a restaurant tech incubator masquerading as a burger joint,'" the *Los Angeles Times* [reported](#) in February. "(Cali Group, CaliBurger's parent company, is the parent company of Miso Robotics as well as two other restaurant industry start-ups.)"



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Mechanization has long displaced human workers, and Flippy and other artificial intelligence advances will accelerate this process. But with the current pandemic, robots “that can cook — from flipping burgers to baking bread — are in growing demand as virus-wary kitchens try to put some distance between workers and customers,” [reports](#) the Associated Press.

Addressing this, White Castle vice president Jamie Richardson said that Flippy “can free up employees for other tasks like disinfecting tables or handling the rising number of delivery orders. A touch-free environment that minimizes contact is also increasingly important to customers, he said,” the AP further informs.

“‘The world’s just reshaped in terms of thoughts around food safety,’ Richardson said.”

Writing of how the pandemic panic will likely accelerate the automation process, the “Brookings Institution [published](#) an analysis in March that found about [one-quarter](#) of human-operated jobs could be at risk of being replaced by automation, or robots,” Fox Business writes.

“‘Robots’ infiltration of the workforce doesn’t occur at a steady, gradual pace,’ researchers wrote. ‘Instead, automation happens in bursts, concentrated especially in bad times such as in the wake of economic shocks, when humans become relatively more expensive as firms’ revenues rapidly decline,’” the site continues.

So along with the fear of disease are cost imperatives. As to this, “Flippy currently costs \$30,000, with a \$1,500 monthly service fee,” the AP tells us. “By the middle of next year, Miso hopes to offer the robot for free but charge a higher monthly fee.”

The *Los Angeles Times* apparently provided an analysis based on the latter model in its February piece, writing that Miso could “offer Flippys to fast-food restaurant owners for an estimated \$2,000 per month on a subscription basis, breaking down to about \$3 per hour. (The actual cost will depend on customers’ specific needs).”

“A human doing the same job costs \$4,000 to \$10,000 or more a month, depending on a restaurant’s hours and the local minimum wage,” the paper added.

So while there’s not much we can do about pandemics (except not create panics with fear-mongering), this does relate to an important issue.

To wit: Leftists’ trumpeting of a \$15 minimum wage certainly is effective demagoguery. To paraphrase economist Dr. Walter E. Williams, however, would you rather have some jobs available at \$8 an hour or no jobs available at \$15 an hour?

Employers respond to minimum wage laws rationally. If, for instance, an employee only brings \$14 an hour of value to a business, a boss won’t pay him \$15 an hour in deference to a law. He’ll instead reduce staff, automate or, if worse comes to worst, shutter the business.

Note, too, that this most severely affects the very people leftist minimum wage demagogues claim to want to help: blacks and Hispanics. They, along with young people, constitute an inordinate percentage of the lower-skilled workers who lose jobs to automation and more experienced workers when employers are forced to pay labor more.

The automation reality also puts the lie to another demagogic appeal: that we need increased low-skilled immigration. At this point, the main job immigrants do that many Americans won’t is voting for socialistic Democrats.



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Personally, I welcome robotic kitchen workers. I still remember how race hustler Jesse Jackson once related that, as a waiter in South Carolina, “he would spit into the food of white patrons he hated and then smilingly serve it to them,” [reported](#) *Life Magazine* in 1969. And the reality is that while food contamination isn’t always bigotry-inspired — it can be accidental or the result of youthful pranks — humans in general aren’t impressively hygienic.

So I may actually start frequenting fast-food joints more often if Flippy becomes king of the White Castle — and beyond. His ascendancy appears assured, too, even if the displacement of low-wage workers inspires the Left to rail against White Castle privilege.

Photo: patty_c/iStock Unreleased/Getty Images

Selwyn Duke (@SelwynDuke) has written for The New American for more than a decade. He has also written for The Hill, Observer, The American Conservative, WorldNetDaily, American Thinker, and many other print and online publications. In addition, he has contributed to college textbooks published by Gale-Cengage Learning, has appeared on television, and is a frequent guest on radio.



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