

Growing outrage over victimization of Nashville nurse RaDonda Vaught

1 April 2022

Statements are pouring in denouncing the victimization of RaDonda Vaught. Add your name and statement by filling out the form at the bottom of this article. Sign up for the WSWs Health Care Workers Newsletter for the latest on this struggle and others like it.

There is an outpouring of support from health care workers for former Nashville, Tennessee nurse RaDonda Vaught, who was unjustly convicted for a medical error. She now faces sentencing in May with the possibility of lengthy jail time.

On March 25, jurors found Vaught guilty of criminally negligent homicide for the unfortunate and tragic death of 75-year-old Charlene Murphey on December 26, 2017, after Vaught inadvertently administered the wrong medication.

A petition on *change.org* demanding clemency for Vaught has been signed by more than 170,000 people as of this writing. Health care workers see the scapegoating of Vaught as an attack on them by the profit-driven health care system and the legal system that defends it.

Below are some of the statements sent to the *World Socialist Web Site*. (See also, “Health care workers denounce scapegoating of Nashville nurse RaDonda Vaught”)

Steve, a former nursing assistant:

“I’m a former nursing assistant who worked in a hospital, and I can testify to the horrible working conditions and the failure of for-profit health care. I worked as an NA on the advice of health care workers, as I was considering a career as a registered nurse at the time. They advised me to do NA work to see what it was like before I committed to nursing school. Best life advice I ever received! I didn’t go to nursing school, and I’m sure I made the right choice. This tragic event confirms it!

“No one should doubt the truth of the statements that are being made by nurses to the WSWs in connection with this event. Staffing shortages will only get worse as a result of this gross miscarriage of justice.”

Cynthia, a nurse in Michigan and Ontario:

“A sad day to be a nurse. We’ve always been promised the hospital will support the nurses. Now, we’re under the

bus.”

Natalie, a nurse in New Jersey:

“As a new incoming nurse, I am extremely disturbed by the possibility of being criminally charged for a mistake. I will surely protect my license and life by refusing to take any risky assignments, verbal orders, or overriding the system in urgent situations. Not risking. How many mistakes won’t get reported from now on? How will the system get improved and perfected? The jury has no idea and had no right to preside over her case. What happened is injustice and will negatively impact patient safety.”

Raymond:

“It shameful that a hospital that claims to foster a culture of reporting honest mistakes without ramification did not back her up.”

Donna:

“There is already a shortage of nurses! I support RaDonda Vaught! Nurses are human, but this whole shady deal looks as if the hospital is partially to blame!”

Olivia, a nurse in Ontario, Canada:

“This is sickening. The justice system in the United States is a joke. This will be the end of nurses. I am in my fourth year and about to graduate, and will not become a nurse because of this. RaDonda was treated as if she was not human, and it’s sickening to think this is our world now and society. There are real criminals out there who kill people *on purpose*. You are putting away an innocent woman who was doing her best to provide care, as this is her job, and made a mistake. She probably made a mistake because every day you come into work, the management system doesn’t care how many patients you have. They say to do it, skip your breaks, don’t kill anyone, get it done.

“I feel sick to be in this profession, and I hope that one day all of these people need nurses when they are sick and realize their actions will be the reason they are petrified to be in a hospital. You can all pat yourself on the back for what is about to happen to the health care system as if it wasn’t already in need of change.

“I am so sorry RaDonda. I am sorry your life was changed forever after this but please know mine was changed forever

as well, along with every single nurse at your side.”

Jennifer, a nurse in Texas:

“This is a system problem that will continue if we don’t look at what can be fixed. Vaught admittedly owned up to her fault. She was not found at fault. She *was cleared by the [victim’s] son!* She continued to work another year after the incident caring for patients. It wasn’t until CMS got involved and threatened funding to Vanderbilt that this became an issue. I support this nurse as I am a fellow RN. I believe this error could have been avoided, but I also believe this is again a wide issue that needs to be resolved. The hospital is more to blame here. Nobody wins.”

Ernesto, a doctor in Florida:

“This is a tragedy due to a broken healthcare system. A medical error is not solely the responsibility of one provider. Shame on Vanderbilt for not acting as a professional institution! Reporting incidents and errors is everyone’s responsibility.

“Are we to fear that each day when we go to work, there is a potential for an error that would result in criminal charges? Hopefully this will bring to light the real truth behind health care shortages. Lack of support and safety in the workplace, dealing with abuse from the system and patients, and nurses still being grossly underpaid, among an endless list.

“Thank you!”

Katrina, a nurse in Missouri and Florida:

“The hospital is solely responsible for this mistake by not following the rules in place! They should put in place a protocol so that this never happens! *All health care workers are at risk in their jobs everyday!*

They have cut the staffing, so it is unsafe to work. Been in my field for 41 years, and I am taking early retirement so I can get out of this field. It is very unsafe now.”

Barbara, a nurse in Tennessee:

“As a nurse, I feel this is a horrific mistake. The role of health care in this country is going to change. A prison time sentence is totally inappropriate. I don’t see why Vanderbilt, who admits to system errors, is out of the loop for retribution.”

Jo, a nurse in Australia:

“This sort of action wouldn’t happen in Australia. You have been let down by your colleagues, your hospital, your country. I personally know the pain of making a serious error at work. We should be supported to address systemic issues and drive change to improve hospital care, not scapegoated as individuals. I can only hope that the USA healthcare system starts to implement some of the basic safety systems that Australian nurses take for granted.”

Janet, a nurse in Arizona:

“I am nurse and have worked in many hospital situations. After this decision I would never work in a hospital

situation. No one is served by sending this nurse to prison.”

Sarah, a nurse in Massachusetts:

“The amount of pressure nurses are under in a hospital should not be allowed! So much danger and risk is at stake for the patient, but the fault is within management and the hospital board!”

Valerie:

“As an RN, I understand the risk of human error that comes with any occupation, but especially in the medical field. As nurses, we understand our actions have consequences, but this is wrong. This nurse was as honest and forthcoming as she could be. She was not supported by her facility and was clearly misled by management, yet she still came forward. She did not set out that day with the intent to end someone’s life. She goes to work with the intent to heal and saves lives.

“We dedicate ourselves to this profession and push through the pain and mental struggles, especially during a pandemic. This is a high intensity and stressful field, but we fight for our patients. This nurse needs someone to fight for her. I hope you grant her clemency. Any other ruling would be a failure to the health care system, nurses and our patients.”

Melissa, a nurse in California:

“As a fellow RN, I think what she’s been through is heartbreaking. We all want the best care and outcome for our patients. So sad this happened and she is the ‘sacrificial lamb/pawn’ in this ever greedy and heartless health care system. We stand united to support her in this fight. God bless her and those people who help her along the way.”



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