

# Diary of a striking Stanford nurse: What's the plan to win our strike?

A Stanford nurse on strike  
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*The WSWS will be publishing the strike diary of a nurse who wishes to remain anonymous for purposes of job security. Are you a Stanford nurse? Contact us and tell us how the strike is impacting you. We respect anonymity.*

The picket line Monday morning felt like a huge celebration. Many nurses were in their uniforms having just come off night shift. Horns were honking, Welch road was lined with at least one thousand nurses. Handmade signs read: “Nurses Unite!” “Am I still a hero?” “Profits over patients and nurses,” “We treat the burns, you treat the burnout.” People were wearing costumes and cheering. Stanford shuttle bus workers drove by and honked in support. Security guards cheered for us.

We are excited to be joining waves of nurses and workers entering into struggle around the world. Right now, tens of thousands of nurses across California are in the same boat. It's critical that we reach out to nurses at Sutter and Kaiser and Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles whose contracts have also expired and get on the same page as them.

There's a feeling that this is the beginning of something larger, that we will win. There is also a strong sense of relief to be away from the stress of our units.

Our fight is not unique to Stanford Healthcare and Lucile Packard. Many of us have worked in different hospitals and different states and we all have the same stories. Missed breaks, low staffing, racing to finish patient assessments and care tasks, lack of supplies, rationed PPE, nurses winding up as patients in the ICUs fighting a COVID infection. In the name of efficiency and profit, we are continually being asked to do more with less.

Earlier this month we had the strike vote. I heard a

coworker explain to another nurse why she was voting yes. “This is the time to do this. It isn't just about us.” Another shrugged and noted, “We have to strike. We can't keep working under this stress.”

Burnout is ripping through the nursing workforce. COVID-19 has greatly exacerbated conditions that lead to burnout and as a result more and more nurses are quitting.

We are fighting for better wages, for safe staffing for far better working conditions because we deserve them. Stanford increased its assets since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we saw none of this money. We fought together with our brothers and sisters across industries to keep the population safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We walked under banners that deemed us heroes. Now, we can't afford our rent to live near the hospital or the gas we need to drive to work.

The shift before the strike had a completely new tone. In any spare moment we talk in the nurses station, comparing notes on what we have heard from other units. No managers were working as they were home resting before their upcoming struggle to keep the hospital running without us.

In the weeks leading up to the strike the hospital worked hard to fix any engineering issues on the units. New wall-mounted vital sign machines that we'd been asking for months suddenly get installed across all units. The floors were waxed, supply rooms were organized and stocked. Nurses are visibly angry about this. It took this long?

On the picket lines, there's an understanding that our current celebratory mood will pass. My coworkers discuss how this will get harder after a week or two without pay. A strike after all is not a party.

We know we are fighting a determined, deep-

pocketed and politically-connected enemy. Stanford has demonstrated its determination to defeat us by threatening to strip our families of health care benefits. We cannot fight them alone, we need the support of nurses at other hospitals.

The company has a plan to starve us out, but we need to formulate a plan for victory. CRONA (Committee for Recognition of Nursing Achievement) has provided no plan for victory. They apparently have no plans to broaden the struggle to nurses at Sutter, Kaiser or Cedars-Sinai. Instead it looks like they are retreating just like they did in 2016 and 2019. The union recently emailed us to say they are cutting picket lines and dropping the demand for a \$3,000 bonus. That's a sign they are preparing to sell us out. We are not even receiving strike pay, even though we've been paying our union dues.

When we are at work on a difficult and busy shift, we nurses have to work as a team, communicate, and share critical information with each other so we know what is going on. The same goes for a strike. That's why we need a plan.

So let's start talking to each other about what we want to win in this strike and how we plan to win it. I'm planning to talk to my coworkers on the picket lines, call the people I know from my shift, and start these conversations about how we make sure this strike ends with the pay and working conditions we need.

We aren't just fighting for ourselves, after all. Let's set up lines of communication with Sutter, Kaiser and Cedars-Sinai nurses and work together. Why should we strike separately when we would be stronger together? Keeping us separated only helps the companies we are all fighting against.

Let's ask each other these types of questions. The main issue is: what is our plan to win? Nobody else is going to answer that question other than the nurses ourselves.



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