

Stop the criminalization of nurses!

Scapegoated nurse RaDonda Vaught fights for reinstatement of nursing license

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Send in your statements of support for the reissuing of Vaught's license and tell us about conditions in your hospital in the form below.

It has been 13 months since former Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) nurse RaDonda Vaught was found guilty of criminally negligent homicide and abuse of an impaired adult in the death of 75-year-old Charlene Murphey on December 27, 2017. Nurses and healthcare workers across the the US and the world rallied in opposition to the politically motivated case, which sought to scapegoat her for the accident and cover up the hospital's responsibility.

Vaught has since returned to chancery court with her attorney to request a hearing with the Tennessee Board of Nursing. Vaught's goal is to make the Board accountable when it revokes a nurse's license without due process. If she wins her appeal, she will be given a new trial with the Board. Vaught is fighting on principle: she says that she has no interest in ever practicing nursing again and does not believe she would be given her license back.

In the first investigation done by the board of nursing, the case was dismissed without any corrective action or probationary period against Vaught and she was able to continue working. However, in 2021 the Board launched a second investigation and revoked her license.

Nurse Erica, a nurse advocate on social media, said "the board of nursing has no oversight," and that "they can do whatever the hell they want and that is really evident throughout RaDonda's hearing." Vaught and her attorney have never been given access to the information of the first investigation, nor the reason why a second investigation was launched.

It has been widely understood by nurses and healthcare workers that Vaught's persecution would open the door for increased attacks against other nurses. Since being sentenced, others have been criminally charged or sentenced for various reasons, including many that do not make headlines.

Aminata Fofana, a nurse who had worked at Capri Gardens Lewis Center nursing home, was sentenced on February 27, 2023, in an Ohio courtroom after pleading guilty to charges of involuntary manslaughter in the death of a patient from asphyxiation on May 20, 2021.

On the morning of May 20, 2021, Fofana went to check on Paul Mowery, who was on hospice care. The patient was using a tracheostomy mask to breathe, where an oxygen tube is inserted into a hole made in the throat. Fofana told authorities that she removed Mowery's tracheostomy mask to clean it because it was soiled, but forgot to reattach the tubing. An hour later, the day shift nurse entered the room and found the patient had died from asphyxiation.

The *World Socialist Web Site* asked at the time, "Where were the safeguards and alarms that could have protected him...How many patients was Fofana carrying that night and how many shifts had she taken prior to the accident?"

In Los Angeles, California, travel nurse Nicole Linton faces six murder charges and five manslaughter charges for her role in a car accident on August 4, 2022. According to police, she was traveling 130 miles per hour (209 kph) when her vehicle barreled through a red light and hit several cars. Three vehicles burst into flames and five people died, including a pregnant woman and her unborn child.

Linton, who was working at Kaiser Permanente's

West Los Angeles Medical Center at the time of the accident, is being held without bail at the Los Angeles Twin Towers Correctional Facility. She has pleaded not guilty to all the charges and has appeared visibly distraught in court. If convicted on all counts, Linton could face 90 years to life in prison.

However, Linton's lawyers say that she suffered a seizure which caused her to temporarily freeze at the wheel, and that she had not slept for four days. She also received a diagnosis of bipolar disorder in May 2018 that required inpatient and outpatient treatment.

Lastly, detention center nurse, Michelle Heughins, is being charged with involuntary manslaughter for the 2019 death of John Neville in Forsyth County Jail in North Carolina. Heughins is being scapegoated for Neville's death, which was caused by brutal treatment meted out by prison guards who had forcibly restrained him. Heughins was the only staff member attempting to stop the restraint and save Neville. Proceedings against the five officers were dropped on April 4 after a secret grand jury failed to indict them.

Nurses face moral injuries in horrific working conditions everywhere. Since the pandemic, nurses have had to face the daily risk of contracting COVID-19. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has become commonplace among nurses and about 90 percent report at least one form of mental health issue or another.

Long hours, overwork, burnout and low pay are ubiquitous, and nurses are leaving the profession in droves due to burnout. It is expected that there will be a shortage of 200,000-450,000 nurses in the United States by 2025.

The scapegoating of healthcare workers is being pushed by the political establishment and the for-profit healthcare industry, while rubber-stamped by the trade union bureaucrats who have left these nurses to their fate.

The National Nurses United (NNU) has endorsed President Biden for a second term. According to the NNU press release, the nurses union is endorsing the Biden administration because of its supposed support for union workers. In reality, Biden is relying on the trade union apparatus to isolate strikes and prevent a broader fight by the workers. This was demonstrated last year when Biden intervened to ban a strike by railroaders.

Meanwhile, nurses have launched a series of strikes across the country. A five-day strike by 1,800 Portland, Oregon nurses began on June 19. Nurses in Kansas and Texas at three Ascension hospitals will take part in a one-day strike on June 27, and nurses at Einstein Medical Center in Pennsylvania have voted to authorize a strike.

They all confront the same basic problem of understaffing, unsafe working conditions and low wages.

Nurses and all workers are coming into struggle against the capitalist system that subordinates them to the profit system and then blames them for the social crisis. But in order for workers to win their struggle, they must free themselves from the straitjacket of the corporatist unions. Nurses must take up the fight and build their own rank-and-file committees and link up their fight with workers across the US and internationally.

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