

New York City nurses defiant on Day 3 of strike: “Everybody deserves health insurance”

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Almost 15,000 nurses at New York-Presbyterian, Mount Sinai and Montefiore hospital systems struck for the third day on Wednesday. The strike, the largest by nurses in the history of the city, is a powerful sign of the emergence of the working class in a movement against inequality and oligarchy.

At issue are dangerously low staffing levels and cuts to nurses’ own health benefits. These tensions have reached a boiling point as the social crisis in the city deepens, and federal policies continue to dismantle the public health infrastructure.

The strike has become the first major class battle in 2026. The nurses are pitted against multimillionaire CEOs, who have the backing of Wall Street and the corporate political establishment, including Trump and, in spite of their posturing to the contrary, the Democrats. Millions of workers throughout the New York area understand this and have given wholehearted support to the nurses’ struggle.

The New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) made last-minute deals with 11 out of 15 hospitals, but the anger of nurses is such that they have not been able to prevent the strike entirely. Negotiations have been at an impasse, but on Wednesday night the New York-Presbyterian Hospital System, the largest hospital in the country, announced that it would resume discussions with the NYSNA on Thursday.

This raises the likelihood that the NYSNA will try to shut the strike down prematurely, as it did in 2023 when it shut down a strike after three days with bogus language on staffing ratios that has done nothing to change things in the hospitals.

The nurses’ strike must develop into a far wider confrontation. This is because the issues at the heart of the strike—safe staffing, healthcare and living standards—can

only be resolved through a direct challenge to the power of the capitalist oligarchy and its representatives in the Trump administration and the Democratic Party that refuses to fight it.

There is potential for a city-wide general strike to defend living standards. This year, hundreds of thousands of municipal and transit workers face contract expirations. Housing in the city has become almost universally unaffordable to workers, while inflation continues to eat away at working class incomes.

Nurses and other workers must act now to unite through rank-and-file committees in order to fight for their demands and prevent inevitable attempts by NYSNA officials to shut down the struggle prematurely. For this, nurses must take the strike out of the hands of the bureaucrats and form rank-and-file strike committees, demanding in particular expanding the strike to all 15 hospitals and rank-and-file control over bargaining.

On the picket line

On Wednesday, the picket line at Mount Sinai West in Manhattan stretched the full block in front of the hospital with nurses chanting their slogans for safe staffing and patient safety. Another line of pickets that stood in the street cheered in response to the constant honking of cars, especially trucks, going by. Socialist Equality Party supporters distributed leaflets with articles from the *World Socialist Web Site* on their strike, which nurses took with great interest.

One nurse told the WSW: “I’m fighting for healthcare. I’m fighting for the rights of every nurse. I’m

fighting for the safety of every patient, and I'm fighting for a fair wage. And I think it's only right. We put our lives on the line every day that we come in. We face workplace violence, and we have to just get through our day the best way we can. And we take the best care of our patients, so I think it's only right that Mount Sinai help us to take care of all of that."

Nurses have started the year without health insurance, even before the strike began. "My kids have no health insurance. I have a special needs son. I'm not really sure what I'm going to do."

This nurse said that they work in a float pool. "So, basically, I'm your fill-in nurse. I go everywhere. They give us these acute patients who it's nearly impossible to provide the proper care for, and then, therefore, it becomes far from safe."

In response to slanders of the strike by management, the nurse responded: "If they had billions of dollars to prepare for this strike, they simply could have hired more nurses and kept our benefits. They had that much money to do it. They do have billions. More. So I think it's just a load of BS. I think that they claim that it's Medicare, Medicaid cuts, but they're still a lot of money there."

On the broader attacks on public health, including cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, they replied: "Oh, it's horrible. Horrible. There's millions of people without healthcare right now. And it was already a struggle to pay the premiums for most people. But that's just a blatant disregard for people, their health and well-being. And we see it every day here."

"It just goes to show that no one cares about the average Joe here, and we're the ones that hold this country together. And it's a big slap in the face. You can send billions to [war in] South America. It's always been about oil. But when it comes to us, we have got to fight the good fight. Everybody deserves health insurance. They deserve childcare. Hopefully we can get that. We would be able to live."

The nurse spoke about "VIP rooms" that hospitals reserve for those who can pay large amounts for their care.

"Okay, so you have a little bit more money than the average patient. You just had surgery. If you want to be comfortable, there's a room upstairs that you can pay for. And it's got a separate kitchen. They call it hospital convenience. It's not fair. Everybody deserves the same treatment."

"I really hope we get there. I mean, we're fighting the fight, but they're playing hardball, and I've never seen it

like this. I've been a nurse for 18 years but for some reason, this just feels a lot different given the current political climate. But I'm hopeful. Hopeful that the people are on our side."

The WSWs spoke to another nurse who works in the Emergency Department. Work is "very taxing," they said. "We try to give the best care that we can to our patients under unsafe circumstances. And this is why we're fighting. It's not about profit. It's about safe patient care, care for ourselves, protecting our healthcare benefits, as well as just overall help in our community. That's what it's about."

"We are saving lives, and we're out here on the battlefield, and we don't even have healthcare for ourselves. There's so many of us with conditions, and we still come out here and we're fighting."

A third nurse with over 20 years of experience, now doing L&D [Labor and Delivery], explained that her department was "definitely understaffed most of the time. Or you could even say all the time because we cannot predict when people are going to have a baby. So sometimes no patient comes in, and sometimes 30 people come in at once. It's so hard. That's why the hospital doesn't want to have enough nurses, because some days they think, oh, we are wasting money just having nurses, but when people come in, it's going to be an issue."

"It definitely poses an immediate risk to the patient's safety. We have to watch mothers and the babies. But if we don't have people, one nurse has to take care of everything, mother and baby."

"We wanted the hospital to just assign one nurse for the mother and one nurse for the baby. But sometimes we have to just focus on the mother because the mother has a hemorrhage and then we don't have time to watch the baby, and then the baby's having hypoglycemia. But there is no nurse who can take care of it because no nurses have time for two patients."

"We are not asking much. Of course, money helps. Look at the economy, a \$2 coffee became \$6. But our main point is we want patients to be safe. We need more nurses."



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