

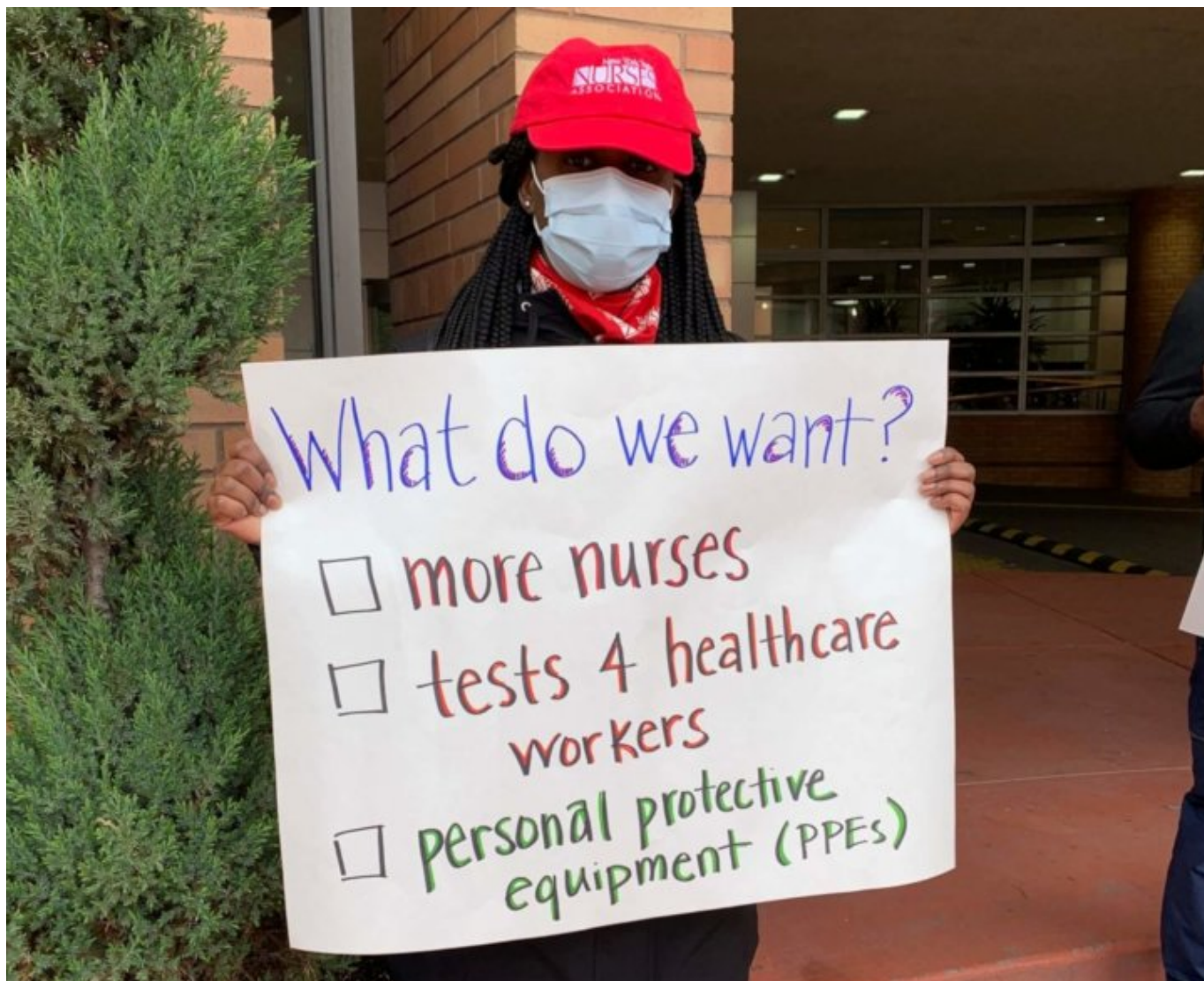


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# Coronavirus central in Queens, N.Y.

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Health care workers protest outside Wyckoff Heights Medical Center near Brooklyn/Queens border on April 10.

As of April 19, [some 8,798 people](#) in five adjoining zip codes in the Queens borough of New York City have the coronavirus. About 350,000 people live there. One out of 40 has the virus.

This writer lives in one of these zip codes, 11372, the Jackson Heights neighborhood. Within its 475 acres are 1,732 people who've tested positive for Covid-19.

People line up, sometimes for an hour, to enter supermarkets and drugstores. They wear masks or other face coverings and try to stand six feet apart.

I can't recall seeing anyone wearing a Trump hat. Some "essential" stores, like bodegas and even Dunkin Donuts franchises, have closed because the owners are worried about catching the virus.

Just about every Chinese restaurant has shut down, even for take-out and delivery orders. Was this due to health concerns or because of the danger of racist attacks fueled by Trump and Fox News?

The 545-bed Elmhurst Hospital is the closest hospital for almost all of the third of a million people who live in these five zip codes. Refrigerator trucks there hold the dead. A line of people wraps around the building to get tested.

In the richest city on earth, there are less than two hospital beds per thousand people in the borough of Queens with its 2.3 million people.

Despite the vicious U.S. economic blockade of socialist Cuba, that country has almost three times as many beds per person.

### **Overcrowded housing = death**

Next to Jackson Heights is the Corona neighborhood where Louis Armstrong lived. Its 11368 zip code has 2,817 cases of Covid-19, the most of any zip code in New York City.

A block from Armstrong's house, Manuel "Manny" Mayi was beaten to death by a white racist mob with baseball bats and a fire extinguisher on March 29, 1991. None of the lynchers of the 18-year-old Dominican honor student were even indicted.

Across Northern Boulevard from Corona is East Elmhurst, zip code 11369, which

has 1,055 cases. Malcolm X and his family lived in East Elmhurst at 23-11 97th Street.

Northern Boulevard is still a death strip for pedestrians attempting to cross. The local chapter of the Black Panther Party helped lead a struggle to get stop lights installed on this busy thoroughfare.

Elmhurst, zip code 11373, has 2,196 people who've tested positive for the coronavirus. Zip code 11370, which includes the Rikers Island jail complex, has 998 cases.

New York City is a densely populated metropolis. But the reason this seven-square-mile area in Queens has so many people who are ill is because of overcrowding.

The five zip codes have an average of over 48,000 people per square mile. That's high and may seem to be unbelievably so to most people living in the U.S.

But there are some pretty ritzy Manhattan neighborhoods that are even more dense. A lot of people can fit comfortably in a luxury high-rise.

Manhattan, of course, has many neighborhoods with poor and working people, including Harlem, El Barrio (East Harlem), Washington Heights, Loisaida (the Lower East Side) and Chinatown.

Black and Latinx communities in the Bronx and Brooklyn have also been hard hit.

What sets neighborhoods like Corona and Elmhurst apart is the number of families and individuals who are forced to live in just a few rooms or just one room.

These are largely immigrant communities with people from all over the planet. From the notices taped, sometimes one on top of another, on almost every light pole, the cheapest monthly rent for a single room is \$600. That's with a shared bathroom.

The least expensive one-bedroom apartment might be \$1,400. That is a big increase from 2011, when \$1,100 was the going rate for renting a one-bedroom apartment.

Meanwhile, there are at least 200,000 apartments in New York City that landlords keep empty in order to maintain high rents.

It isn't just overcrowding that helps transmit the virus. Many of the people living here are considered to be "essential workers" and have to continue to go to work.

Sixty New York City transit workers have already died from the coronavirus. The Number 7 train that goes through Corona, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights continues to take thousands of hospital and supermarket workers to their jobs.

Trump spits on these workers, many of whom are Asian, Black, Latinx and immigrants.

### **Inequality spurring reaction**

If the entire U.S. had the same infection rate as these zip codes in Queens, it would have 8 million cases of Covid-19. [Thirty-three states](#) have fewer cases than this slice of Queens.

The fascist organizers of the white mobs protesting in Lansing, Mich., and other state capitals to "Reopen America" are taking advantage of this unevenness.

New York City isn't the only place that's been devastated by the pandemic. Seven thousand people have died in nursing homes.

Thousands of meatpacking and poultry workers across the country have fallen ill. So have incarcerated workers at Chicago's Cook County jail and hundreds of other prisons.

Covid-19 has swept through Black communities in Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis and

New Orleans. Over a thousand members of the Navajo Nation have the virus. [Forty-one have died.](#)

Trump supporters use the concentration of deaths among Black, Indigenous and Latinx peoples to spread the lying message that it's just a disease for "them." Forty percent of Michigan's deaths from the disease are of African Americans while only 14 percent of the state's population are Black.

The reactionary rallies against the necessary public health measures needed to contain the virus are not grassroots efforts. These astroturf events are funded by billionaires like Michigan's DeVos family. They're attempts to divert attention from the wholesale failure of the capitalist state to protect people against pandemics.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is one of those who wants to lift the health restrictions. She ignores over 500 workers, largely immigrants, who have fallen ill at the [Smithfield Foods pork plant](#) in Sioux Falls.

Not all white workers believe the garbage spewed out by Trump and Fox News. The tragic progression of the coronavirus, spreading to largely white suburbs and rural areas, will challenge the belief that it's just an inner city problem.

Nurses and their unions will serve as a political connecting rod between the oppressed communities and many of the segregated white neighborhoods. The people united will defeat the Trump virus.

