

# Labor seizes the time to ‘Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!’

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 18, 2023



As leaders in the vanguard of social activism in the labor movement, Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) locals in San Francisco and Oakland, California, shut down their ports on February 16 to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Their actions initiated a campaign of solidarity for Mumia that spans the globe.

Most notably:

- **South Africa’s National Union of Metalworkers** demonstrated at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria and the U.S. Consulate in Durban.
- In Tokyo, **Japanese railroad workers**, members of the Doro-Chiba labor union, held a protest for Mumia in front of the U.S. Embassy.
- **In Berlin, the IG Metall** (Metal Workers Industrial Union) Working Group on Internationalism (Arbeitskreis Internationalismus) sent a message of solidarity with the ILWU port shutdown: “Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent

man, falsely put into jail since 1982 for a crime he did not commit. Like Leonard Peltier, who is imprisoned for 46 years, he is a victim of a system of racism and exploitation. Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier should be free! We send you our warmest greetings and wish you success with your port shutdown solidarity action.”

## **Judge to rule on Mumia’s case**

Currently, Mumia Abu-Jamal’s defense lawyers are reviewing evidence that had been hidden in the District Attorney’s closet for 36 years, evidence that attorneys say shows that the police and prosecution intentionally manufactured Mumia’s guilt and suppressed the truth of his innocence.

His lawyers expect to find further evidence that police coerced and bribed witnesses and that extreme racism and judicial bias have permeated all the proceedings against Mumia. The discovery of this new undisclosed evidence provides the basis for a retrial.

Judge Lucretia Clemons has ordered the Philadelphia District Attorney to turn over additional files — up to 200 boxes — to Mumia’s defense team. At this time, actions are planned to support Mumia, ensure that the evidence is heard, and win Mumia Abu-Jamal’s freedom. Judge Clemons is expected to issue her ruling on Mumia’s case sometime between Feb. 16 and March 16.

At home and across the country, the ILWU action is building a growing movement for Mumia’s freedom.

Keith Brown, president of the Oakland Education Association, wrote on behalf of the teachers’ union:

“The teachers of Oakland have a long history of support for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Now is the time to bring Mumia home. On behalf of the 3,000 educators of the Oakland

Education Association, I urge the immediate release of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

“It is our collective responsibility to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and end the mass incarceration of Black Americans. Mumia’s case exemplifies the worst of mass incarceration in the United States.

“This moment calls for the display of healing the wrongs of discrimination, racial bias, and unfairness. Justice and doing the right thing means granting Mumia Abu-Jamal the opportunity to have a fair hearing. This includes work that we, as the Oakland Education Association, have been doing to create a culture of inclusion and anti-racist practices with our educators.”

In Portland, Oregon, Local 28 of IATSE, the theater, TV, and movie workers union, passed a resolution for Mumia’s freedom. The wording of Local 28’s resolution is the same as one passed by the Portland painters union in October.

It demands immediate freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and calls for a policy of working-class struggle through agitation, publicity, protest, and continued coordinated workers’ action on a national and international scale to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, and calls on workers of all countries to use their power to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

On Feb 13, radio stations WBAI in New York and WPFW in Washington, D.C., aired a teach-in: “Mumia’s Freedom is Labor’s Cause.”

The teach-in featured labor leaders:

- Brenda Stokely, former pres. AFSCME DC 1707, Local 205, co-convener of the Million Worker March;
- Jack Heyman, retired Exec. Board Member of Local 10 International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU); David Newton, member Local 10 ILWU and nephew of Huey Newton, founder Black Panther Party;

- Chris Silvera, Sec.-Treas., Teamsters Local 808;
- Charles Jenkins, member TWU Local 100, Pres. NY Chapter Coalition of Black Trade Unionists.

On Feb. 18 in Boston, a Free Mumia rally was planned.

Compelling support was voiced by Angela Davis in a letter to Irvin Jim, General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa:

“As I write you today on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal, I remember the powerful letter you wrote in 2016 to Governor Wolf of Pennsylvania, when you emphasized similarities between the South African apartheid government’s treatment of its political prisoners and the conditions of prisoners in Pennsylvania.

“Today, we need to take advantage of the fact that we have the best chance in a very long time to actually achieve his (Mumia’s) freedom.”



# International dockworker unions gather in Durban

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A delegation of international and local dockworker trade unions and academics have descended on Durban to mark the anniversary of the 1973 Durban strikes that preceded the formation of South Africa's powerful trade union movement.

Trade union representatives from the United States-based International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) and Namibia will gather in the city with international and local activists, academics, and leaders of the Revolutionary Transport Union of South Africa (Retusa) and the General Industries Workers Union of South Africa to tackle issues currently facing dockworkers, at the [1973 Durban Strikes Conference from January 26-28](#).

Academic and historically focused sessions will take place at the Durban University of Technology, and union and academic discussions and a photographic exhibition of the 1973 strikes and dock struggles in Durban and Oakland will be held at the BAT Centre on the Esplanade.

The event marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the strikes, which saw some 100 000 African and Indian workers downing tools to demand better wages and working conditions, impacting more than 100 firms - from textile and brick factories to metal and chemical plants. The strikes were followed by the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions in 1979 and the Congress of South African Trade Unions in 1985, which played a pivotal role in the liberation struggle against Apartheid.

In 1984 members of the ILWU Bay Area's branches, Locals 10 and 34, refused to

offload South African cargo for 11 days, inspiring local residents to join the US anti-apartheid movement.

ILWU Local 10 retired Secretary-Treasurer, Clarence Thomas, speaking at a media briefing ahead of the conference on Tuesday, said dockworkers held a strategic position of power to wield influence on how governments managed their economies.

“Dockworkers have more leverage than any workers in the world, being at the point of the global supply chain, because when we shut down – rail, trucking, cargo flight schedules – the food we eat, the fuel we put into cars, computers, handheld devices, and the shoes we wear, all come off a ship. There are no workers in the world that understand capitalism better than longshore workers because before the cargo can be stored it has to come off that ship – and if we don’t load and offload it, nothing is going to happen,” he said.

ILWU said in a statement that it would hold an exchange with local unions to focus on how unions can work together to organize and carry out international dockworker blockades against ships and “how to fight the privatisation of public services.”

Retusa general secretary, Joseph Dube, welcomed the collaboration between unions.

“We are fighting privatisation as you are. We need to learn from each other and make our unions an active fighting force for permanent jobs, democratic workers’ control over the harbour facilities, and above all to fight for a living wage for all,” Dube said.

Conference sessions and discussions will include a review of historical mass strikes against capitalism, trade unions and economic policy, foreign investment and labor rights, how to fight privatization, how to organize mass worker parties, and how to tackle the future challenges of the release of political prisoners, pandemics, war and

peace, and climate change.

SA History Online is hosting the conference in partnership with the Durban University of Technology, Wits History Workshop, University of Fort Hare, Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, University of Cape Town Department of Sociology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, the Chris Hani Institute, and Workers College based in Durban.

Source: [South Africa Freight News](#)



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## **Over 7,000 nurses are on strike in New York City. Here's why**

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February 18, 2023

On Monday, January 9, over 7,000 New York City nurses from Mount Sinai and Montefiore hospitals in Manhattan and the Bronx, respectively, went on strike. Nurses, organized by the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA), are demanding safe patient-to-staff ratios, fair wages, and to maintain existing

healthcare benefits.

Nurses, who authorized a strike on December 21 with an overwhelming vote of 98.8% in favor, have been in contract negotiations with hospital administrations across the city. Initially, the number of nurses set to strike was around 16,000 at eight hospitals: NewYork-Presbyterian, Montefiore, Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Morningside and West, Maimonides, BronxCare, Richmond University Medical Center, and Flushing Hospital Medical Center. However, hospital bosses scrambled to reach tentative agreements with the nurses to avert a strike at all hospitals save Montefiore and Mount Sinai Hospital.

The mood outside of Mount Sinai Hospital, in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, was fiery, despite negotiations being tense for the past few days. The picket line swelled with a crowd of hundreds of nurses, bisected by a road of slow-moving vehicles, many honking in support.

Mount Sinai management has claimed that NYSNA walked out of negotiations, while NYSNA has claimed the same of the hospital bosses.

“It is deeply unfortunate that instead of agreeing to either of these solutions and rescinding its strike notice, Mount Sinai’s NYSNA leadership has made the decision to ask nurses to leave patients’ bedsides during a tridemic,” [claimed](#) Mount Sinai on January 9.

Montefiore also made similar implications regarding the commitment of NYSNA nurses to their patients. “Despite Montefiore’s offer of a 19.1% compounded wage increase—the same offer agreed to at the wealthiest of our peer institutions—and a commitment to create over 170 new nursing positions, and despite a call from Governor Hochul for arbitration, NYSNA’s leadership has decided to walk away from the bedsides of their patients,” wrote the hospital in a [statement](#).



Again and again, hospital bosses and their representatives have hammered in the point of how disastrous a strike by nurses would be. A strike would be a “public health calamity,” claimed Ken Raske, of the Greater New York Hospital Association.

Nurses are indeed essential, as evidenced by hospital executives’ costly efforts to make up for the losses of the strike by [transferring infants to other hospitals](#) or [hiring travel nurses](#), who are paid more than a regular nurse. Union nurses have pointed out the incongruity of these decisions, as the millions of dollars required to prepare for a strike could be used to simply pay nurses more. And, as striking nurses have emphasized consistently, the picket line is the last place they want to be.

“We would rather be in there, doing what we love,” Diane, a nurse at Mount Sinai, told *Peoples Dispatch*, referring to the hospital building behind the picket line.

“We don’t wanna leave our patients. This is the last thing that we ever want to do. But unfortunately we’re pushed to this point,” said Jessica, also a nurse at Mount Sinai. “Management left their patients, not us. We’re here fighting for our patients.”

These nurses are referring to one of the primary concerns of unionized nurses: the lack of safe staff-to-patient ratios at New York City hospitals. New York state actually has [existing staffing laws](#), which were passed in 2021 to address precisely the issue of hospitals using understaffing to cut costs. However, since then, New York state has [failed](#) to enforce these laws. Mount Sinai currently has 500 staff openings and Montefiore has 700, according to NYSNA.

Julia, another Mount Sinai nurse, told *Peoples Dispatch*: “When there’s too many patients being taken care of, then it compromises safety, and at the same time, it compromises your license. So that’s why we’re here. It really is safety for the patients as well as for the nurses.”

“Who were [the ones] here during the pandemic? Who is actually at the bedside?” Julia continued. “So if it is [the hospital executives’] family being taken care of, how could you expect me to really be addressing all of the issues of the one patient, if there’s maybe 17 other patients being taken care of in the emergency room in or in the ICUs or as inpatients.”

Hospital bosses claim that understaffing is due to a [shortage](#) of nurses. In reality, nurses are [leaving the profession](#) at increasing rates due to low wages and high stress. Union nurses argue that by investing in hiring more staff, which will decrease stress, and paying nurses more for their work, hospitals will be able to address a shortage of nurses. Instead of making these investments, the union has pointed out that hospital executives paid themselves [tens of millions in bonuses](#) during the height of the pandemic.

“We want New Yorkers to be taken care of. We stayed with you during COVID. You clapped for us with pots and pans,” said Nella Pineda-Marcon, nurse at Mount Sinai and NYSNA secretary, at a January 9 press conference at the Mount Sinai picket line. “Our loyalty is with New Yorkers. Our loyalty is with the community. It’s never profit over patients.”

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)



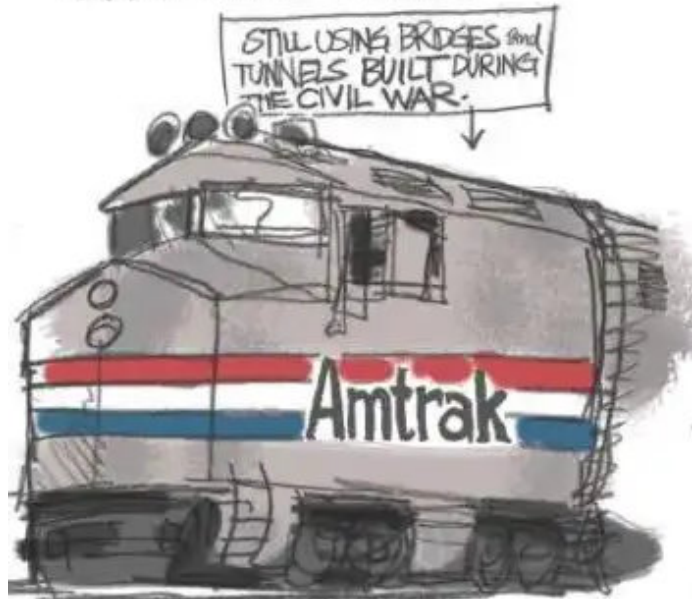
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# **Capitalism's war on railroad workers continues under president whose support for unions rings hollow**

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February 18, 2023

# GUESS WHICH ONE GETS \$1 TRILLION FROM CONGRESS!

21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
PROGRAM TO REBUILD  
AMERICA'S  
INFRASTRUCTURE



PROBLEM-PLAGUED  
JET FIGHTER DESIGNED TO  
DESTROY INFRASTRUCTURE

(ON THOSE INFREQUENT INSTANCES WHEN IT  
ISNT GROUNDED BY TECHNICAL GLITCHES)



The U.S. Congress imposed a labor agreement on 115,000 railroad workers on December 1, disregarding the vote from four unions to reject it. That is how little real democracy there is in the United States.

The millionaires' club on Capitol Hill could not even support giving sick days to railroaders chained to round-the-clock work schedules.

Why should a capitalist government running a world empire with hundreds of military bases and a dozen spy agencies intervene in this labor dispute? It involved less than one-thousandth of the workforce.

Aren't railroads part of the "old economy," like the factory workers labeled "metal

bashers” by *The Economist* magazine? Haven’t railroaders become obsolete in the so-called information age?

People cannot eat algorithms. The Internet cannot move chemicals, cars or containers off-loaded from ships.

While computerization has destroyed the jobs of thousands of railroad clerks, it has not replaced the need for rail transport. It is the visibility of railroads that has declined.

Outside Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor and a few other places in the United States, passenger trains have virtually disappeared. The loss of millions of manufacturing jobs has also meant the loss of railroad jobs.

Yet deindustrialization, by increasing imports, also demands moving millions of shipping containers from the ports. The delays in the supply chain occurred not only on the docks but also in the railroad yards.

The seven “Class 1” railroads [account for 94% of the industry’s revenues](#).

They are making more profits than ever, helped along by decades of deregulatory policies that began 40 years ago. The Union Pacific and Berkshire Hathaway’s BNSF — which monopolize rail traffic west of Chicago — [raked in more than \\$12 billion in combined profits last year](#).

It is the number of rail workers that has fallen like a rock. There were [two million](#) workers on the railroads in 1920, accounting for more than 6% of the non-farm workforce.

The Great Depression helped [reduce railroad employment](#) to 1.5 million workers in 1947. Over the last 75 years, employment [plunged 90%](#) to just 147,800 railroaders on the job in November 2022.

That is a [smaller](#) number of railroad workers than there were in 1870, one year after the first transcontinental railroad was opened. This shrunken number of railroaders moves a million freight carloads a month and nearly a million containers.

## **Racism hurts all poor and working people**

The elimination of more than 1.3 million railroad jobs since World War II ravaged communities coast-to-coast. This mass elimination was all the more painful because Black workers and women were finally being hired in many railroad crafts.

Charles Hamilton Houston, Dean of the Howard University Law School and mentor to future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, fought against the industry's Jim Crow hiring practices.

According to historian William H. Harris, "from 1928 to 1949, not a single Black person found employment on a class 1 railroad as fireman, brakeman, trainman, or yardman." (*The Harder We Run: Black Workers since the Civil War*)

The loss of railroad jobs was deeply felt in Hamlet, North Carolina. The city was an important junction on the old Seaboard railroad, now part of the CSX system. CSX has a yard in Hamlet, while two Amtrak trains a day stop there.

Because of railroad job cuts, many workers had to seek employment at the non-union, low-wage Imperial Foods plant instead. Twenty-five workers were killed there on September 3, 1991, when a fire broke out.

The plant's owner, Emmett J. Roe, [locked the doors](#) because he thought workers—many of whom were Black—would steal chickens.

White and Black workers died together because of Roe's racism. Forty-nine children were orphaned.

## **Getting rich while workers die**

Railroads were the largest U.S. industry of the 19th century and dominated the stock exchanges.

The Vanderbilts, who controlled the New York Central system, became, for a time, the country's richest family. The Western Hemisphere's greatest slumlords—the Astors—had millions invested in the Central.

Wall Street's biggest banker, J.P. Morgan, manipulated railroad systems before and after launching U.S. Steel with a stock swindle.

Andrew Carnegie had been a division superintendent for the Pennsylvania Railroad before he became a steel boss. Carnegie's first plant—now the last remaining steel mill in Pittsburgh—was named for Pennsylvania Railroad President Edgar Thompson. Most of Carnegie's customers were railroads buying steel rails or steel bridges.

The Bush family also climbed capitalism's bloody ladder via railroads. Samuel Prescott Bush was superintendent of motive power for Milwaukee Road.

He became manager of Buckeye Steel Castings, which made railroad wheels in Columbus, Ohio. The outfit was run by Frank Rockefeller, a brother of the world's first billionaire, John D. Rockefeller.

Samuel Prescott Bush's son Prescott Bush became a U.S. senator from Connecticut. More importantly, he was a partner in the Brown Brothers Harriman private bank that manages some of the biggest fortunes. The Harriman family controlled the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Illinois Central railroads with more than 30,000 miles of track.

Besides laundering money for Nazi cartels, Prescott Bush was the father and

grandfather of war criminals: President George Herbert Walker Bush and President George Walker Bush.

While these families were accumulating their riches, one in nine trainmen was injured in 1909. One in 205 was killed.

The response of the old Interstate Commerce Commission—abolished in 1996 in the name of deregulation—was to stop collecting these embarrassing statistics. (*Economic History of the United States* by Ernest Bogart)

### **Putting workers on a 'rifle diet'**

Workers revolted against these conditions in 1877. Railroad companies cut wages while doubling train size. Today's Precision Scheduled Railroading has [lengthened many trains](#) to two miles or more while getting rid of 62,000 railroaders in seven years.

Pennsylvania Railroad President Thomas Scott declared the strikers should be put on a "rifle diet." Dozens of workers were killed in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Reading, Pennsylvania.

Black educator Peter Clark, who had been an associate of Frederick Douglass, addressed strikers in Cincinnati. (*1877: Year of Violence* by Robert V. Bruce)

In that same year, railroad boss Scott helped forge the rotten deal that betrayed Black people by overthrowing the Reconstruction governments in the South.

Eugene Debs led the biggest railroad strike in 1894. The former locomotive fireman and future socialist presidential candidate led the American Railway Union.

In solidarity with striking workers at the Pullman Company, ARU members cut Pullman sleeping cars off from trains. The boycott tied up trains across the country.



President Grover Cleveland sent in U.S. troops to break the strike. General Nelson Miles shot down workers in Blue Island, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.

The military officer's hat had earlier helped capture Geronimo and would later invade Puerto Rico in 1898.

The ARU was an industrial union that united workers in different crafts. But it did not represent all railroad workers.

By a vote of 112 to 100, ARU delegates refused to allow Black workers to join. To his credit, Debs urged accepting Black workers.

Debs should have resigned instead of leading a Jim Crow outfit. The worst scabbing comes from racism within the labor movement.

Black workers were kept out of railroad unions. They had to form their own labor organizations, as described in *Brotherhoods of Color* by Eric Arnesen.

The ARU did not even consider organizing Pullman porters. But in 1937, the Pullman Company signed a union contract with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, led by A. Philip Randolph.

The BSCP, with its 18,000 members, helped lead the Black freedom struggle. Randolph organized the March on Washington Movement that forced President Franklin Roosevelt to set up the Fair Employment Practice Committee in 1941.

It was Pullman porter E.D. Nixon who, while going between Montgomery, Alabama, and Chicago three times a week, helped to organize the Montgomery bus boycott. Dr. King praised his work in *Stride Toward Freedom*.

A. Philip Randolph helped initiate the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, where Dr. King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.

One of the ten demands of the march was a \$2 per hour minimum wage. That is worth [\\$19.39](#) in November 2022. The labor movement needs to demand a minimum wage of at least \$20 per hour.

## **Jilting railroads**

So why did the U.S. capitalist class turn its back on railroads? In 1955 only four corporations—AT&T, General Motors, U.S. Steel and Standard Oil of New Jersey—had more assets than the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Richard King Mellon—whose family controlled Alcoa Aluminum, Gulf Oil (and, hence, Kuwait), as well as what became the Bank of New York Mellon—was the most influential PRR director.

Right behind the Pennsy was the New York Central, which collected rent from Park Avenue skyscrapers. Texas oilmen Clint Murchison, Jr., and Sid Richardson backed Robert Young's takeover of the Central in the 1950s.

The Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads merged on February 1, 1968, to form the world's largest transportation company. When Penn Central declared [insolvency on June 21, 1970](#), it was the largest bankruptcy until Enron and almost took Goldman Sachs with it.

Railroads lost their monopoly of land transportation to trucks. But that is not the entire story.

The collapse of anthracite coal mining doomed New England railroads. A railroad can't lose money carrying coal.

Railroads had been such a bonanza that competing capitalists built lines that duplicated each other. Seven railroad companies connected Chicago and Council Bluffs, Iowa. All of them sought to bring freight cars off the Union Pacific to the

Windy City.

The old Nickel Plate (now part of Norfolk Southern) was built between Chicago and Buffalo to exhort the Vanderbilts into buying it.

Railroads' Achilles heel was what Karl Marx called the tendency of the rate of profit to decline. Surplus value—from which profit is derived—can only be made from exploiting living labor.

The tremendous amount of dead labor invested in railroad tracks, bridges, yards, signal systems, and locomotives became an albatross for capitalism. The capitalist state took over railroads throughout Western Europe.

The profitable railroads in the U.S. west and south needed Penn Central in order to exchange freight with it. The Sunday *New York Times Magazine* revealed that legislation creating Conrail — which took over Penn Central — was drafted by the Union Pacific's general counsel's office.

The U.S. government injected billions into Conrail, which was sold in a fire sale to CSX and Norfolk Southern. Conrail's "modernization" included abandoning thousands of miles of track and getting rid of 4,000 block operators in the signal towers.

Deregulation, which includes the 1980 Staggers Act, served as a welcome mat for super-billionaire Warren Buffett to take over the BNSF railroad.

A brutal rationalization [reduced Class 1 railroad mileage](#) to fewer than 92,000 miles by 2020.

Thousands of miles are operated by "short lines," which are often non-union.

**Take over the railroads!**

No one should have expected “Amtrak Joe” in the White House to help railroad workers. Biden was a loyal servant of the DuPont dynasty for 36 years as a U.S. senator from Delaware.

He collaborated with the super-racist Strom Thurmond to fight school integration. Biden pushed through legislation that helped increase the prison population to more than two million poor people.

Railroad management continues to push for one-person crews. The runaway train that exploded in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, in 2013, killing 47 people, had just one crew member.

Yet the mere threat of a strike forced both the Union Pacific and CSX railroads to [slightly modify](#) their severe attendance policies.

As Frederick Douglass declared, “If there is no struggle there is no progress.”

One sign of a new spirit among railroad workers is the [election of Eddie Hall](#) as president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, part of the Teamsters. Hall opposed the agreement that was forced on railroaders.

Any action by railroad workers will be welcomed by the multinational working class. It will inspire millions as the Black Lives Matter movement has.

The railroad monopolies do not only owe sick days and respect. They owe reparations.

Nine thousand miles of track in the South were laid by enslaved Africans before the Civil War. Thousands of additional miles were built by Black prisoners afterward. The steel-driving man, John Henry, was worked to death by the Chesapeake and Ohio, now part of CSX.

General George Custer had it coming, and he died for the Northern Pacific — now owned by Warren Buffett's BNSF — that was invading Lakota Sioux land.

Railroads are a vital public utility like electricity, gas, and water. All these utilities need to be taken over by the people.

Source: [CovertAction Magazine](#)



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## **16,000 nurses say they are ready to strike across New York City**

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An estimated 16,000 unionized nurses from private hospitals across the New York City metropolitan area announced strike authorizations on Friday as current contracts are set to expire and the region continues to experience a “tridemic” health crisis that includes Covid-19, flu, and the respiratory illness known as RSV.

The New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) issued ten-day notices on Friday for strikes to begin on January 9 if contract agreements are not reached at eight hospitals, including NewYork-Presbyterian, Montefiore, Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Morningside and West, Maimonides, BronxCare, Richmond University Medical Center, and Flushing Hospital Medical Center.

Nurses at each of the hospitals voted separately on whether their union members would go on strike as they called for better caregiver-to-patient ratios, increased benefits, and a sustainable and fair solution to chronic staffing shortages.

In a statement, the NYSNA said the notices “give hospitals time to plan care for patients while nurses are on strike. But the best way for management to protect patients is to listen to nurses and settle fair contracts that protect patient care in the next 10 days.”

*BREAKING: NYSNA nurses at eight hospitals delivered 10-day notices to strike today. NYSNA will continue to bargain non-stop between now and January 9th in the hopes of reaching agreements. [#NYCNurseStrike](#) [#PatientsBeforeProfits](#) [#SafeStaffingSavesLives](#)<https://t.co/nxSK8TWLtL> [pic.twitter.com/FZdMReFWAS](https://t.co/FZdMReFWAS)*

— NYSNA (@nynurses) [December 30, 2022](#)

“We are truly struggling,” Michelle Gonzalez, a registered nurse and NYSNA member, [told](#) local NBC affiliate News 4 outside a hospital in Yonkers on Friday. “We have been telling the institution that there is not enough of us, that we can not split ourselves into two people—if we could, we would easily have done that already.”

“This is about our communities,” added Vanessa Weldon, another nurse and member of the union. “This is about providing the best patient care to our community.”

Weldon said the message to management “is that we need a fair contract.” According to Gonzalez, the strike authorizations at the various hospitals are about making sure the voices of nurses are being heard.

“Somebody has to hear us,” she said. “Somebody needs to understand that we are struggling. This is not going to be sustainable for much longer and we’re only continuing to lose more healthcare workers” if action is not taking to improve working conditions and benefits for the nursing staff.

Ahead of the vote and Friday’s announcement, NYSNA president Nancy Hagans, BSN, RN, [said](#) the union does not take the strike threat “lightly.”

“Striking is always a last resort,” Hagans said. “But we are prepared to strike if our bosses give us no other option. Nurses have been to hell and back, risking our lives to save our patients throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, sometimes without the PPE we needed to keep ourselves safe, and too often without enough staff for safe patient care.”

“Instead of supporting us and acknowledging our work,” she added, “hospital executives have been fighting against Covid nurse heroes. They’ve left us with no other choice but to move forward with voting to authorize a strike for better patient care.”

Source: [Common Dreams](#)



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# **UC strike victory: Capitalist academic machinery no match for workers' power**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 18, 2023

The strike by academic workers at University of California has ended.

For more than a year the bargaining teams from United Auto Workers Locals 2865 and 5810 tried to negotiate for better wages, an improvement in child care benefits and a slew of other important demands for the 48,000 teaching assistants, postdoctoral student workers, researchers and graders. It took the longest UC strike ever and the largest strike of 2022 to finally force UC negotiators to understand that they were up against real union power.

Twelve thousand of the original 48,000 strikers, mostly postdoctoral workers and researchers, had settled and returned to work on Dec. 11 after winning stronger benefits and wage gains of 20%. This second settlement, reached Dec. 23, is for the



remaining 36,000 strikers.

This group has been incredibly underpaid, with some receiving salaries of less than \$24,000 a year. Yet they also had a good deal of leverage in this strike because of their important role in grading papers and serving as teaching assistants.

The new contract includes wage gains between 55% and 80%. Some salaries will be boosted to \$36,000 over a two-year period.

Rafael Jaime, president of Local 2865 [told the Los Angeles Times](#) that, although the agreement didn't win every demand, the wage increases "would help alleviate the staggering rent burdens faced by many graduate students."

The new contract also has added more funding for child care, more parental leave and health care for dependents, as well as supplemental tuition for up to three years for international students.

Because of high California rents, many UC workers had plowed through their savings, taken out bank loans and in some cases even resorted to living in their cars. Even the new pay scale won't solve all financial difficulties for many, and that was reflected in a substantial number of the bargaining team and the rank-and-file opting to hold out for more and for less delay in the pay increase.

Still, combined with the important benefit increases that address issues particular to this diverse group of workers, the agreement is an historic workers' victory in this longest and largest UC strike ever.

Although not listed in the contract, near the top of the list of gains secured by the strike are dignity and respect.

**UC bosses underestimated strikers**

The bureaucracy of the most well-funded university system in the country underestimated the resolve and pent-up anger of this important workforce. During the strike, the wide frustration was transformed into a terrific example of skilled and determined collective organizing.

Strikers disrupted a meeting of the Board of Regents at the UCLA campus, held a sit-in at the university president's office, sat-in at a Sacramento UC administrative office and picketed the UC chancellor's home in Riverside County. Dozens of arrests over the course of the strike failed to halt the momentum.

The optics of this well-funded public university paying poverty wages drew a lot of sympathy and solidarity. Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine fame performed at a major strike rally in Los Angeles. Construction workers from three different unions halted work on a building at a San Francisco campus, while both UPS Teamsters drivers and FedEx drivers stopped deliveries.

FedEx drivers are not unionized, and this act of solidarity is noteworthy, given the recent rise in union organizing drives. Jeff Bezos' Washington Post [seemed to be sounding the alarm](#) for the bosses over the acts of solidarity when it wrote: "The strike arrives amid a wave of increased labor activity ... Workers have scored historic union victories at Amazon, Starbucks and Apple this year. Minnesota recently faced the largest private-sector strike in the nursing industry in U.S. history."

### **Regents' dirty deals**

Without an understanding of the class character of those who control the purse strings at UC, one might wonder why the university held out for so long. By the time the university negotiators finally came up with a reasonable offer, the strike had forced the cancellation of all lectures and some classes. Some final exams had to be modified and grades were delayed.

It is the 26-member Board of Regents that makes budget decisions for UC and thereby decides on wage levels of UC workers. Their average salary is a whopping \$3,242,909, or \$1,559 per hour.

Their biographies on the UC website point to mostly academic careers - seemingly benign. But whatever the intentions of the individual Regents are at the time they are appointed by the California governor, their conduct has shown them to be repeatedly feeding at the capitalist pig trough.

In 2017 their four to six lavish dinner parties every year were exposed in the media, forcing the UC president to stop reimbursing them for good. The straw that broke the camel's back was a \$17,600 reimbursement for a dinner held the night before they voted to raise students' tuition.

A Wikipedia article provides links to some [other significant episodes of greed](#) and self-enrichment over the years. These include direct investment of more than \$10 million of university money into a petroleum company owned by one of the Regents.

A \$50 million contract was funded by the BP oil company, giving them ownership of all clean-energy research at UC Berkeley and ownership of one-third of all patents based on UC workers' research. BP also gained hiring and firing privileges over and above professors in the clean-energy research department.

During his tenure as a Regent, Richard Blum, the multimillionaire husband of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, steered tens of millions of UC funds into companies in which he had a stake.

The Blum scandal, the oil company investment and BP takeover of clean-energy research were just a few examples in a pattern of Regents redirecting hundreds of millions of university dollars into investments with ties to their own personal business activities.

Over the decades, while all of this has been going on, wages for many UC workers have been kept just above the poverty level, high rents have devoured their meager incomes, while the cost of attending a UC campus has been steadily going up.

But the UC workers' victory will be remembered for a long time, along with the other organizing victories of 2022. Union power will win!



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## **‘Nurses have had enough’: Largest-ever NHS strike kicks off in Britain**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 18, 2023

Tens of thousands of nurses across Britain are set to walk off the job Thursday in what's been described as the largest-ever strike by National Health Service workers, who said they were forced to act after the government refused to negotiate over pay amid painfully high inflation.

The walkout represents NHS nurses' first national strike, and it comes as British [rail](#) and [postal](#) workers are also taking major labor actions in response to falling real

pay, meager benefits, and worsening conditions.

Nurses taking part in Thursday's walkouts in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland — one of two scheduled days of action in the week—lamented that a strike became necessary but said they had no choice as inadequate pay and staffing shortages put themselves and patients in danger. Healthcare workers also pointed to years of Tory-imposed funding cuts as a factor harming nurses and compromising Britain's public healthcare system.

"Nurses have had enough — we are underpaid and undervalued," [said](#) nurse anesthetist Lyndsay Thompson of Northern Ireland. "Yes, this is a pay dispute but it's also very much about patient safety. The fact we cannot recruit enough nurses means patient safety is being put at risk."

*"We have reached crisis point. We have been undervalued, underpaid and underappreciated for the safety critical role we do."*

*Chair of RCN TUC [@Dkell999](#) shares why nursing staff have been left with no option but to strike.*

[#FairPayForNursing](#) [#RCNStrike](#) [#NursesStrike](#) [pic.twitter.com/Gmc4ejXIsn](https://pic.twitter.com/Gmc4ejXIsn)

— The RCN (@theRCN) [December 15, 2022](#)

Pat Cullen, general secretary and chief executive of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) — the union that represents NHS nurses — said in a [statement](#) Thursday that "for many of us, this is our first time striking, and our emotions are really mixed."

"The NHS is in crisis, the nursing profession can't take any more, our loved ones are already suffering," said Cullen. "It is not unreasonable to demand better. This is not something that can wait."

[#RCNStrike #FairPayForNursing pic.twitter.com/uWOgGDmmPL](#)

— Kumudu De Costa (@DeCostaKumudu) [December 15, 2022](#)

<https://twitter.com/josiahmortimer/status/1603334285917814785>

The RCN said a strike became inevitable after British ministers declined every offer to start formal pay negotiations. Earlier this week, Cullen [met with](#) Tory Health Secretary Steve Barclay in a last-ditch effort to discuss pay before launching the national strike, but he refused to budge.

“I asked several times to discuss pay and each time we returned to the same thing—that there was no extra money on the table, and that they would not be discussing pay with me,” Cullen said. “I needed to come out of this meeting with something serious to show nursing staff why they should not strike this week. Regrettably, they’re not getting an extra penny.”

Strike actions had also been planned in Scotland, the RCN noted, but they were put on hold after the Scottish government agreed to negotiate.

According to the Health Foundation, an independent British charity, nurses saw a [5% pay cut](#) between 2011 and 2021 when accounting for inflation.

Earlier this year, the British government backed a [4-5% pay raise](#) for most NHS nurses, but the RCN said that’s far from enough given the country’s inflation rate of nearly 11%. RCN is demanding a 5% raise on top of inflation, which British officials have [rejected as too high](#).

As a result of the strike, Thursday, and the next planned action on December 20, parts of the NHS will be shut down but urgent services will [remain fully staffed](#).

A [recent survey](#) found that nearly 60% of Britons support the nurses' decision to approve a strike.

"It is a tragic first for nursing, the RCN, and the NHS," Cullen [told](#) *The Guardian* of Thursday's national walkout. "Nursing staff on picket lines is a sign of failure on the part of governments."

Source: [Common Dreams](#)



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## **Retired railroad worker Stephen Millies on Biden & Congress collaborating against railroad**

# workers

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 18, 2023



<https://youtu.be/9uvv00oCZp8>



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## **To hell with the railroad barons: The railroads belong to the people!**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 18, 2023

Nobody should be surprised by President Joe Biden's strikebreaking role in imposing a contract on railroad workers. The agreement had already been voted down by



workers in several unions.

The imposed contract fails to address the need for sick days or any time off — paid or unpaid — for employees subject to call 24/7. Workers can still be written up for seeing a doctor or taking their children to a clinic.

Remember that “Amtrak Joe” had represented the Du Pont dynasty as a U.S. senator from Delaware for 36 years. He loyally served the Mastercard plastic loan sharks, also based in Delaware, in that U.S. House of Lords.

Biden worked with the late Senator Strom Thurmond, a vicious racist, to fight school integration. In the 1990s, Biden helped pass laws that increased the prison population to over two million.

The man in the White House can stop a strike of working people seeking fair treatment. But Biden refuses to use his pen to free 78-year-old Leonard Peltier. The Indigenous political prisoner, a leader of the American Indian Movement, has spent 46 years in jail after being framed.

### **What now?**

The BNSF Railway’s harsh and arbitrary attendance policy remains in place. This scheme assigns 30 points to every employee.

Except for vacation days, two points will be deducted for being absent on any day from Monday through Thursday. Three points will be taken away for taking off on a Sunday.

Workers will be fined four points if they don’t come in on Friday or Saturday. Federal holidays are the grand prize.

Being sick on those days will cost an employee seven points. Never mind that

workers and their family members get sick on holidays, too. Many days of overtime are required to earn back new points.

Even the capitalist courts claim to consider people innocent until proven guilty. The BNSF — completely owned by super billionaire Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway hedge fund — automatically penalizes workers who "mark off" whether or not they and their children are ill.

One of Buffett's BNSF serfs can be fired for "losing" 30 points despite having a decades-long good record. Railroad management imposed this crap in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic without any negotiating with the unions.

The contract imposed by Biden and Congress doesn't address any working conditions. Many freight engineers and conductors are on call with no set work schedule. They may be forced to be away from their families for a week or more.

So are the maintenance-of-way employees who fix the track. They have to live in bunk cars or motels during the week, sometimes hundreds of miles away from home.

These issues go beyond wages, although that "big wage increase" that the media mentions will be eaten up by inflation. All workers deserve dignity.

An Amtrak yardmaster told this writer that when he worked on the Norfolk Southern Railway, a trainmaster demanded that he do stretching exercises. It was as if this worker and father were back in kindergarten.

### **Profits first, safety last**

This lack of respect has only increased since the introduction of the speed-up system called Precision Scheduled Railroading. There's nothing precise about PSR.

Even capitalists in the chemical, food and other industries [have complained](#) of

increased train delays. “They’ve cut labor below the bone, really,” Surface Transportation Board Chair Martin Oberman [told](#) the House Transportation Committee on May 12. “In order to make up for the shortage of labor, they are overworking and abusing the workforces.”

PSR helped destroy [62,000 railroad jobs](#) between [March 2015 and November 2022](#). The 30% plunge in jobs and service delays is linked to increasing the [average train length](#) by 25%. Many railroad yards were closed or downsized.

A relentless drive to reduce crew size resulted In the Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, tragedy. Forty-seven people were killed there in 2013 when a runaway train of oil tank cars exploded. There was only one crew member, an engineer, on the train.

PSR was the brainchild of the late Hunter Harrison, the son of a Memphis, Tennessee, cop. [Harrison’s daddy](#) helped enforce racial segregation laws for a local ruling class that helped kill Dr. Martin Luther King.

Harrison introduced PSR on the old Illinois Central Railroad, which was gobbled up by the Canadian National Railway. Harrison became the Canadian National’s CEO and imposed PSR on all the railway’s workers.

Yet as of Dec. 1, all Canadian railroad workers and a million other “federally regulated” employees in Canada [will get 10 sick days](#) annually. Why are Canadian railroaders getting sick days while the U.S. Congress refused to provide any?

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau serves the banksters just as U.S. politicians do. A big difference is that a million workers joined a general strike called by the Canadian Labor Congress on Oct. 14, 1976. They were protesting the cutback policies of Justin Trudeau’s father, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

Many Canadian workers vote for the New Democratic Party, which was co-founded by the Canadian Labor Congress. That’s unlike the U.S. Democratic Party, which

was founded by the slavemaster and rapist Thomas Jefferson.

This greater political awareness includes labor defending former Black Panther Party member Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was framed and has spent 41 years in Pennsylvania prisons. The [Ontario Federation of Labor](#) voted in 2011 to “reaffirm its support of Mumia Abu-Jamal and step up its efforts to win his freedom.”

### **We need a people's takeover**

The mere threat of a strike has forced both the [Union Pacific and CSX](#) railroads to slightly modify their severe attendance policies. As Frederick Douglass declared, “If there is no struggle there is no progress.”

In 1877, a co-worker of Douglass, Peter Clark, addressed striking railroad workers in Cincinnati. (“1877: Year of Violence” by Robert V. Bruce.)

The drop in railroad employment from 2 million workers in 1920 to 150,000 a century later has devastated communities coast-to-coast. These job cuts accelerated as Black workers and women workers were finally being hired in more jobs.

Hamlet, North Carolina, was an important junction on the old Seaboard railroad, now part of the CSX system. Because of the loss of railroad jobs, many local workers were hired by the non-union, low-wage Imperial Foods plant instead.

Twenty-five workers were [killed there on Sept. 3, 1991](#), when a fire broke out. The plant's owner, Emmett J. Rowe, locked the doors because he thought workers – many of whom were Black – would steal chickens.

White and Black workers died together because of Rowe's racism. Forty-nine children were orphaned.

Over 50,000 miles of U.S. railroad lines have been abandoned. The seven big U.S.

and Canadian “class 1” railroads [hailed in profits](#) of \$27 billion last year.

That’s more than double what these railroads [paid in wages](#). Meanwhile, CSX CEO James Foote [raked in \\$20 million](#).

The railroad monopolies owe not only sick days but reparations. Nine thousand miles of track were laid by enslaved Africans before the Civil War.

Thousands of more miles were built afterward by Black prisoners like [John Henry](#), the “steel driving man.” Henry was worked to death by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, then run by Collis P. Huntington, and now part of CSX.

Hundreds of Chinese workers died building Huntington’s Central Pacific Railroad across the Sierra Nevada mountains. General George Custer had it coming, and he died while leading an incursion into Lakota Sioux land for the Northern Pacific Railway, now part of BNSF.

Instead of BNSF being owned by Warren Buffett with his \$100 billion-plus fortune, it should be run by the people. To guarantee jobs, service, and safety, we need a people’s takeover of the railroads.

*The writer is a retired Amtrak worker and a member of the American Train Dispatchers Association and Transportation Communications Union.*



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# Baltimore supports railroad workers' right to paid sick leave

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
February 18, 2023

December 8 — A rush-hour protest in downtown Baltimore showed support for railroad workers under attack. The newly formed Ad Hoc Committee To Support Railroad Workers called the action.

Protesters expressed their outrage at the railroad bosses for refusing to pay workers sick pay and at Biden and Congress for the “no strike law” that bars workers from walking out.

Cindy Farquhar, a local activist who emceed the action, exclaimed, “The railroad industry is the most profitable sector in the U.S. today. We in Baltimore will not roll over when they attack unions — rail workers deserve a decent job.”

Sharon Black, a local Amazon warehouse worker who came straight from work, proclaimed, “We need a union at our warehouse, and I am here today to show

support for the railroad workers.”

A group from the newly founded union, Pratt Workers United, attended and spoke. Ellie McCrow stated, “We are here to say no to government strikebreaking and that all workers have a right to a union.”

Maximillian Alvarez, the editor-in-chief of the Real News Network, pointed out that the railroad industry should be publicly owned.

Other union and community representatives participated, including the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); Unemployed Workers Union; Peoples Power Assembly; American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE); and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 24.

Passing motorists honked in support, and two members of the Airline Pilots Association stopped to thank protesters, explaining that they are up against the same thing.

Baltimore is the city where the Great Railroad Strike was launched in 1877. The Maryland governor used armed troops to attempt to crush it, murdering 22 railroad workers.

