

# Abraham Lincoln, the Working Class and Nurses on Strike



After reading about the 800 nurses **on strike** at nine Appalachian Regional Healthcare hospitals in Kentucky and West Virginia, Alisa Woodard, a steward for AFGE Local 1438, wanted to share the following thoughts.

I have come across this segment of a speech by Abraham Lincoln and found it to ring so true to the current climate that I wanted to share it with my fellow unionists.

Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital; that, in fact, capital is the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not *first* existed, that labor can exist without capital, but that capital could never have existed without labor. Hence...labor is the superior—greatly the superior—of capital.

This speech brings to mind the plight of the nurses on strike in Kentucky, trying to make sure that the money made by the administering of aid with their hands is used wisely, and of the aluminum plant workers who have lost their jobs because they wished to form a union, to insure that they too reaped some of the fruits of their labors.

That Lincoln was speaking on slavery at the time, just increases the correlation to the environment of today. That while slavery has been abolished, the desire of the rich to ride on the backs of the workers still persists. It is our job, our responsibility to fight together, to defend the workers and ensure that the slavery of the working class is abolished.

History has often repeated itself and we find ourselves in this place again. Not since the beginning of the labor movement has the climate been so strongly against our efforts. It makes our work all the more challenging and the positive results all the more vital. The time for change is now, the time for success now. We must work all the harder because of the importance, because our charges, **the working class**, are relying on us to prevail.