

The Hunger Strikers: "Stop the War on Our Health"

We want to draw attention to the war on us--working people. We want to let the world know how Gov. Pataki's brutal policies are destroying our health, our families and our lives.

Laura Gillis

"I was injured by chemical exposure while working as a word processor on a temporary job assignment at a chemical manufacturing company. On my 11th day I developed an injury that has damaged my body and my life. Today more than 10 years later, I am joining with other workers injured on the job, along with working people hurt by the toxic air or economic fallout after 9/11 to hold a hunger strike because we have all reached new levels of frustration and exhaustion as we struggle for our health and existence. For too long Governor Pataki has ignored our efforts to dialogue and has refused to meet our demands to make changes. This hunger strike is our next effort to be heard and to have our demands executed, now! Let our government know the world knows how badly we are treated here, and stand beside us. All people deserve the right to health."

You Di Liao

"My family was concerned when I told them I was doing this hunger strike. I told my family that I have the support of my peers and my community. I do not know yet the hardship of a 7 day hunger strike but I am determined to do this. To have an honest chance of making the government listen, I need support. All who are not joining me on the hunger strike, need to get involved and become active. You have a role to play."

Nereida Buitrago

"I have problems with my eyes and my allergies because of the air from the World Trade Center. But I can't get health insurance so I have to scrape together what little money I can to cover medicine. A lot of my neighbors on the Lower East Side are suffering even worse health problems and we don't know what's going to happen to us down the road. Instead of trying to help us, Gov. Pataki is making it even harder for us to survive. A lot of people say that we won't be listened to with all the money going to the war. But we can't wait. We need change now. We've done everything else – marching, protesting. This is another beginning."

We are not alone. Joining us are other NMASS members such as **Maria Reyes, Arek Tomaszewski, Elaine Hoffman, Henryk Wiechno, and Stanislaw Kocimska**. All of us have either been injured on the job, our lives and health ruined by long work hours and a Workers' Compensation Board that has left us to die, or we're been hurt by the toxic air of 9/11 and government neglect.

Together, along with thousands of others, we demand that the Governor take immediate action to:

1. Give workers the right to say "NO" to endless work hours beyond 40 hours that rob us of our time and health.
2. Overhaul the Workers Compensation system to provide interim benefits within a week, raise the minimum weekly benefit level and resolve cases within three months.
3. Expand Family Health Plus so that all New York's working people can enjoy health coverage.
4. Establish a medical institution to specialize in studying the effects of the 9/11 toxic air on people and to provide appropriate medical care.