The Thank You No One Deserves
Kaiser has just announced that they will no longer continue to provide the 80-hour paid leave for workers who test positive for COVID-19. They also have decided to stop providing housing and childcare assistance.

After months of calling us heroes, after months of posting ads bragging about their great services during this time of crisis, after months of making us work in unsafe conditions with a lack of PPE, and after years and years of raking in billions in profits from our work, this is the thank you that no one deserves.

Racism is a Healthcare Issue
Before the COVID crisis, Black people were already more likely than white people to die from cancer, and more likely to suffer from diabetes, chronic pain, and depression. Black mothers were more likely to die during childbirth, with Black children experiencing higher levels of stress. And now we’re seeing that Black people are 2.4 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than whites. But the cause is not race itself, it’s the systemic racism of this society.

Black people in the U.S. are more likely to live in food deserts, with limited access to fresh produce. They’re less likely to have access to green spaces, and more likely to live in areas without fresh air or water. Black workers are more likely to work in hazardous occupations, with wages even lower than poorly paid white workers.

All this to say, if we want to fix the inequities in healthcare, we have to fix the systemic problems that lead to these health conditions in the first place.

Same Struggle, Same Fight
For months, French healthcare workers have been on the frontlines of the pandemic with a shortage of PPE and little help from the government authorities. As the government plans to reopen the economy, healthcare workers are barely being considered. Now, they have decided enough is enough. So, healthcare workers took to the streets on June 16th to protest these attacks.

It didn’t take long for the protesters to be met with tear gas and police repression. This response from the government shows just how hollow their praises of health workers really were. But most importantly it shows that across the world, healthcare workers and workers in general, are facing the same struggles, so why not connect across borders and fight the same fight?

If the Glove Fits
Last week, Kaiser Oakland experienced an extreme shortage in an essential PPE item. Gloves in the most common sizes, medium and large, could not be found anywhere in the hospital. These sizes are used by the majority of Kaiser workers, and should always be in stock.

Gloves are necessary for the work we do in the hospital, and simply going without them isn’t an option, especially when we’re in the middle of a pandemic. This was such a dire emergency that workers took it upon themselves to use the high-quality sterilized O.R. gloves, and some ordered gloves online so they could continue going into work safely.

Other Kaiser hospitals around the Bay Area had sufficient stocks of the gloves in these sizes which could have been sent to where they were desperately needed, and all it would have taken was a phone call to coordinate. Instead, Kaiser showed their true colors and chose to risk the health and lives of workers and patients by not treating this PPE shortage as an emergency.