

“They are just here trying to make a living for themselves and their families”

US auto workers speak out in defense of immigrants

A WSWS reporting team
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The escalating attack by the Trump administration on immigrant workers is evoking a strong reaction in the working class. While the unions, including the United Auto Workers (UAW), are aligning with Trump’s reactionary program of “America First” nationalism, there is a broad opposition to the attempt to scapegoat immigrant workers for the deplorable conditions created by the capitalist system.

The *World Socialist Web Site Auto Worker Newsletter* and the Socialist Equality Party spoke to autoworkers in Detroit and Chicago over the past week on the threats against immigrant workers and the fight to unite the working class in defense of democratic rights. Many spoke in opposition to the immigrant raid.

Supporters of the SEP and International Youth and Students for Social Equality visited the Fiat Chrysler Warren Truck Assembly Plant north of Detroit. They set up a banner and spoke to workers during afternoon shift change, explaining the anti-democratic character of the policies of the Trump administration and the UAW.

A number of workers stopped to give their comments.

Yousef, a young worker at Warren Truck, said about the attempt to scapegoat immigrant workers, “It is sad and it is ridiculous to think there are people who are supporting this, at least some of them.”

The WSWS explained that the ruling class was promoting the attack on immigrant workers to divide the working class and divert attention from the attacks being carried out on jobs and living standards.

“The billionaires like Trump are responsible for this,” Yousef said. “They are making the decisions. Even

Trump’s parents were immigrants at one point. It doesn’t make any sense.”

Asked about the UAW’s support for Trump’s chauvinist agenda, Yousef said, “The UAW is supposedly defending us. After all, they do have minority workers. I don’t get it. But, that is big companies for you. The UAW and Fiat Chrysler work hand-in-hand. FCA, Ford, GM and the UAW work hand-in-hand. They are all trying to make money. The UAW is inside the big companies’ pockets.”

Another Warren Truck worker said, “I think it is horrible what is going on. Everyone deserves a chance. This is supposed to be the ‘land of the free.’ So give people freedom.”

Asked what he thought of the Trump administration, he added, “We need everyone to stick together, this is a horrible situation.”

However, another young Warren Truck worker said, “Illegal immigrants should be deported,” adding that there are not enough jobs for American workers.

An SEP supporter challenged him, saying, “It’s not Mexican immigrants or Muslims who have taken jobs and cut the wages of workers. It’s the giant corporations and banks and billionaires like Trump.”

He explained that the ruling class had a long history of trying to divide the working class along racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic lines. “Your grandparents were immigrants too, and there was a time when signs would be posted at employment offices that said, ‘Irish need not apply.’ Immigrants are treated like pariahs to use them as cheap labor. The working class was only able to move forward by uniting black, white,

native-born and immigrant workers against the capitalist exploiters.”

He also noted that big corporations like Fiat Chrysler, an Italian-based company, could go anywhere in the world to get cheap labor, including Detroit, but workers are hunted down and deported if they travel to another country to try to improve their lives and feed their families.

The worker thought about it and after a few seconds said, “I have an Irish background, and it’s true they were discriminated against when they first came to this country. I’m also Native American, and I don’t like what’s happening at Standing Rock.

“As far as the corporations and the banks go, they stole and crashed the economy, and they got away with everything. We’re struggling just to make ends meet. I think it would be better if we didn’t have borders and conflicts because people all over the world want the same things.”

A *WSWS Auto Worker Newsletter* reporting team also visited the Ford Chicago Assembly Plant. Reporters asked Lloyd what he thought of Trump’s attack on immigrants. “A person could say ‘I’m not going to go to America because of all of the killings that are going in Chicago.’ So you’re going to avoid all of America because of one city? It’s the same thing with immigrants.”

Referring to Trump’s attempt to place a ban on immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries, he said, “Just because a very small part of Middle Eastern people may be ‘terrorists,’ whatever the case may be, you’re going to take it out on all of them? That’s messed up.”

When asked what he thought about the unions’ effort to place the blame on foreign workers for supposedly taking jobs from American workers, he said, “It’s not necessarily the workers, it’s the companies. They care about the product. It’s always about profit, it’s always about making money. These big corporations don’t care about workers. The government is a big corporation, too.”

Claderic, another autoworker at the Chicago Ford plant, also condemned the attacks on immigrants. “I think the attacks on immigrants are wrong. Not everyone is bad or out to harm us. They’re just as much American as we are. I think they have a right to go and work anywhere they want. They are just here trying to

make a living for themselves and their families, and they shouldn’t be deported.

“Trump’s ‘America First’ policies won’t benefit us. This ‘wall’ thing he’s talking about is stupid. He’s got to be the worst president we’ve ever got. His decision-making is terrible. They want to try and stop the Mexican immigrants from getting here, but half of all our food comes with their help.”

Asked about UAW President Dennis Williams’s statement that the UAW is willing to work with Trump on the basis of a program of economic nationalism, Claderic said, “Who benefits? Not us. The CEOs and shareholders make billion-dollar bonuses, and we don’t get any of that.

“Trump doesn’t want to reason with other countries or other people. He doesn’t want to reason with immigrants, he just wants to bully them, and bullying like this never works.”



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