

Autoworkers take to social media to defend young Ford worker killed in apparent suicide

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Autoworkers have turned to social media to speak out on the October 20 death of a young Ford worker at the Woodhaven Stamping Plant, just outside of Detroit.

Twenty-one-year old Jacoby Marquis Hennings was buried Saturday at the Mt. Olivet Cemetery on the east side of Detroit, after a funeral service attended by hundreds of workers and young people, including a large delegation of Chrysler workers. The 2014 high school graduate and son of two Chrysler workers, he held down two part-time jobs, one at the Ford plant, and the other at Fiat Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly Plant. He maintained this exhausting schedule in hopes of being hired on as a full-time worker.

While the full details of his death have not been revealed, Hennings apparently went to the UAW Local 387 office in the Woodhaven Stamping plant looking for help after a supervisor disciplined him for coming in late and sent him home. Shortly after 9 a.m. the union informed workers to get out of the plant because of an "active shooter situation." The Woodhaven police chief, Robert Toth, said Hennings "took his own life" when his officers "encountered him" in the plant.

A media spokesperson for the Wayne County Medical Examiner told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the medical examiner had concluded that the cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head and that the manner of death was "suicide." However, she said, it could take several more weeks before the autopsy report is completed and available to the public. The WSWs has also filed a Freedom of Information request with the Woodhaven Police Department to obtain an official police report on the shooting.

Hundreds of autoworkers from throughout the United States have shared articles from the *World Socialist Web Site* on this tragedy. Unlike the corporate-controlled media, which has quickly dropped the story, writing it off as just another workplace shooting by a "disgruntled

employee," the WSWs has connected the death to the brutal conditions facing temporary part-time (TPT) employees and the treachery of the UAW, which agreed to the expansion of TPTs—who still pay dues to the UAW—to provide the auto bosses with a source of disposable cheap labor.

The WSWs is concealing the identity of the workers commenting on our articles to protect them from retaliation by the auto companies and the UAW.

D, a worker from Wisconsin, posted: "This death is on Fords and the Union Hands...simple as that. Period."

CH wrote: "I have been blessed with never working Part Time at Ford. They say we are part of the Ford Family but truth be told we are just a number to them, a tool used to build cars and all are replaceable. It's sad someone so young thought that was his only escape. I'm sending prayers to his family for healing comfort."

Former Woodhaven Stamping worker SM wrote, "There is absolutely zero union representation at that plant. I bet he (Jacoby Hennings) was being screwed with every day and the union was nowhere to be found. I worked there as a legacy employee and it was depressing."

S, who worked with Jacoby at Warren Truck said, "He was as sane as the next man/woman... talked to the young man, picked his brain and so forth...he was just trying so hard to make it out here....he began to feel like there was no one he could talk to or trust....his union had FAILED him and some of his co-workers as well... This is an example of why WE need to make OUR union give US the information we need to make proper life decisions. He didn't know if he was gonna have a job when our plant moves our product up the road to another plant...he was concerned about his livelihood just like the next person."

"As long as the workers are divided by employee status they can cycle folks in and out," said another worker. "The watered down Union leadership colludes with the

manufacturers over their union brothers and sisters. This reduces to a root cause of divide and conquer intended to extort lower wages and benefit concessions at worker expense ... Meanwhile, execs and these companies rake in record profits ...”

J, another Ford worker, said, “Only if our union would back us up on this. They are more of a company now than Ford is.”

“This sounds like strike able issues to me—Money, Health & Safety, Working Conditions,” said A.

IB wrote: “Only getting worse as they phase out the legacy workers, keep giving us worse contracts, and eventually phase out the unions.”

C replied, “Unions won’t be phased out. They’re part of management now that they’re big shareholders for the Big 3. They’re no better than management at this point. At least on the international level where the contracts are done. Also, look at all the bribery scandals lately.”

Another Ford worker in Michigan said, “I am a TPT. Ever since I started it’s been nothing but stressful, saddening, and discouraging to step foot in our workplace. The day we signed our hire in forms, we (orientation group) were led to believe we were going to be making \$17 an hour, which is what the contract stated. After our first paycheck, they changed our pay rate to 15.78 and also retrieved the monies back they apparently overpaid us out of our following check.

“My pay has been wrong numerous times. Sometimes I would be missing a whole 10-hour shift, holiday pay, 2 days pay, well you get my drift. There were times I felt as if wasn’t going to be able to pay my rent. The union would not represent me fairly. There have been plenty of times where union reps would walk by all the tpts when canvassing the plant to say hi, and ask if anyone needed assistance.

“I decided to go to the union president after a month went past without my paycheck being fixed and he hung up in my face. Earlier this year, I was in school full time, my supervisor and team leader, and union reps were aware. I was forced to change shifts with a 32-hours notice, during a week before my finals. I reached out to labor department, as well as union reps, and no one helped at all because I was a tpt. I was told this past Christmas that Ford doesn’t celebrate Christmas, therefore no holiday pay was issued to tpts. All of the full-time employees got paid, they just didn’t call it holiday pay, they called it something else.

“I get forced to change departments and work shitty jobs for half the pay... It is very discouraging how us tpts

are being mistreated, used for cheap labor, and bounced around like a basketball.”

DS wrote: “I heard the stories, but didn’t really believe them....UNTIL I saw it with my own eyes. Guy here at Chrysler had a heart attack and management was upset because where he fell they couldn’t run the line.”

TM wrote: “Sorry for your loss !!! It is so very sad!!! Prayers for his family and friends. Working two full time jobs, not enough sleep had to be a big part of the problem and whatever else was going on! Very tragic!”

MB said: “Part time for 5 years, always the worst job, management always holding that full time carrot in front of your face but never coming thru. It was very frustrating.”

AC, a retired Chrysler worker, said, “I believe there’s more to the story. Something is being covered up and Ford people already know we have been sold out by the union after Obama came with a suggestion on the 2 sides working something out until business was back on its feet again. The UAW and bosses took a hand shake and did this lower pay, cut our break time, some of the holidays and more outsourcing. All those that died to make a union possible were rolling over in their grave when they took that hand shake. Ford is back passing out big bonuses to their people while it’s been 13-15 years since we had a raise.”

JB added, “Legacy workers earn nearly 30 an hour the T.P.T. (temporary part time) and (L.T.S.) long term supplemental earn way less than that and most are only allowed to work 3 days per week, which is why most have to have a second job just to make ends meet. So if you have not walked in those shoes you have no clue to what these folks have to do to survive in this industry that don’t give two sh##s about the factory line workers. You are just a number and very expendable and replaced with someone they may pay even less to do your job. Prayers for strength and healing to this young man’s family !!!! Things need to change in these plants. It’s all big corporate greed & profits.”

The WSWS urges workers to subscribe to the *Autoworker Newsletter* and continue to send in comments about conditions of TPTs and their expressions of support for Jacoby Hennings and his family and friends.



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