

Former TPT workers at Jeep seek to reopen lawsuit against UAW, Fiat Chrysler

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A group of temporary part-time workers at the Fiat Chrysler Jeep complex in Toledo, Ohio are asking a judge to reexamine their lawsuit asserting that they were denied seniority and other rights by management and the United Auto Workers. The initiative is in response to the UAW corruption scandal and as sentiment among workers grows for the nullification of the labor agreements signed by the UAW.

An attorney for the workers says the recent plea deal by former FCA lead negotiator Alphons Iacobelli admitting the company paid \$1.5 million in bribes to UAW officials to obtain favorable contract terms provides grounds for their case to be reopened. The US Court of Appeals is currently reviewing the lawsuit for the Sixth Circuit.

The case, *Slight vs UAW Local 12*, was filed on behalf of 34 temporary part-time (TPT) workers at the Jeep complex who were originally hired under the higher-paid Tier I wage. In March 2013, after a long delay, the workers were hired full-time by the company, but at the lower Tier II wage. The workers then filed a grievance through the UAW; however, the union's review board quietly withdrew the grievances in January 2014. Workers were not notified of this fact until October 2014. As a result of this stab in the back the workers later filed a lawsuit against both management and the UAW.

The renewed action by the former TPT workers follows the launching of a lawsuit by a group of former workers at the Jeep Wrangler Paint Shop who were fired from their jobs in 2012, apparently as a result of a sweetheart deal between the UAW and FCA. Management had wanted to get rid of the workers in order to hire lower-paid replacements.

The UAW international official involved in both cases was Troy Davis, who served between 2014 and

2015 as vice president of the Making our Children Smile foundation, a dubious charity run by now retired UAW Vice President for Fiat Chrysler, Norwood Jewell, who has been implicated in the corruption scandal. In his plea agreement, Iacobelli acknowledged that FCA funneled money through the UAW-Chrysler National Training Center (NTC) to Jewell's charity.

A Jeep employee familiar with the lawsuit by the former TPT workers told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, "From day one those guys worked full-time; they never did TPT hours. Even to the last day they told them they would keep their wages, their pensions and their seniority. Then they dropped them from \$28 an hour to \$16.66. The UAW just told them to 'shut up and be glad you have a job.'"

Meanwhile, three Fiat Chrysler workers in Michigan are suing the UAW for the return of millions of dollars in union dues paid by autoworkers saying the contracts negotiated by the union were illegitimate due to union officials accepting bribes. Raymond Sterling, the attorney for the workers, filed the suit in US District Court on January 26.

In the latest development in the UAW corruption case, Monica Morgan, the widow of the late UAW Vice President for Fiat Chrysler General Holiefield, pleaded guilty to charges of filing false tax returns. She faces a maximum of 27 months in prison under sentencing guidelines plus restitution.

Morgan admitted to hiding \$201,000 in illegal money she received as part of a complex bribery scheme involving Iacobelli and Holiefield. The two men, along with other top-ranking UAW and FCA officials, skimmed a total of \$4.5 million from the NTC. The money was used for lavish purchases, including jewelry and designer clothes. The more serious charges of conspiracy and fraud that had been leveled against

Morgan were dropped as a consequence of the plea deal.

The \$201,000 figure cited in the plea deal is a fraction of the money Holiefield and Morgan had been charged with pocketing. According to the original indictment, Morgan's firm Wilson Diversified Products received \$435,000 in payments from NTC funds. A portion of the funds was laundered through a fake charity run by Holiefield. FCA executives also used NTC money to pay off the \$262,219 balance on the couple's home.

On her Facebook page Morgan boasts of her high-level connections with the Democratic Party establishment and her association with other celebrities. It includes photos of herself with different prominent figures, including President Obama, Hillary Clinton and Colin Powell.

While it is likely that Morgan provided additional information to prosecutors in exchange for her lenient punishment, the plea deal may also indicate that the government is pulling back on the case, fearing that the exposure of rampant corruption is provoking a rank-and-file rebellion. A number of articles in the establishment media have commented on the dangers posed by the undermining of the authority of the UAW.

While legal action is entirely legitimate, workers cannot rely on the courts, let alone the FBI, to defend their rights and class interests. In every plant workers should elect rank-and-file factory committees to assert their needs and demands in opposition to the union-management dictatorship in the factories. These factory committees should declare the current contracts null and void and fight for the broadest mobilization of workers to restore all the concessions handed over by the UAW. The committees should advance their own demands, including abolishing the two-tier system, an immediate 25 percent wage increase and the transformation of all TPTs into full-time workers with full wages and benefits.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* spoke with Toledo Jeep workers about the conditions they face under contracts signed by the UAW, including the one in 2015 that sharply increased the number of TPT workers who have no rights.

"We work just as hard as the regular workers," said one young female TPT. "A lot of people are upset. A lot of workers complain about not getting help from the union. Every UAW official you talk to gives you a

different answer to your question."

She said FCA management was asking TPT workers to sign up for a mandatory six-day-per-week schedule. "They want us to work as full-time, but we don't get any benefits."

Another young TPT worker said he had been at the Jeep complex for four months. "The UAW doesn't care about TPTs. We pay full union dues, but don't get representation." Asked about the UAW corruption scandal, he remarked. "I heard about it when I hired in. I wonder, how long will the UAW last?"

Reflecting on the conditions faced by TPT workers, he said, "It leaves you with a sour taste not getting the right benefits. We should not have to work for six years and then basically become new hires all over again without seniority.

"We have more TPTs in our plant than full-time workers. They are considering laying us all off for the retooling for the new Jeep Wrangler. We would get unemployment benefits, but how long would that last?"

"The whole process of getting hired in here took five months. I had to work side jobs in the meantime, and I have a baby to support."



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